Spirit-mediums, Sacred Mountains and Related Bon Textual Traditions in Upper Tibet

CALLING DOWN THE GODS



BY

JOHN VINCENT BELLEZZA

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To the transmitters of sacred knowledge

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FOREWORD

When *Brill's Tibetan Studies Library* was first conceived, it was our hope that in this academic series we could cover the widest possible range of high quality but accessible academic work on Tibet and the Tibetan Himalayas. The aim is not just to include academic monographs, edited volumes, works of reference and reprints of important works, but also to make available research materials of a more original, controversial and occasionally also preliminary nature that hold great potential of generating further discussion and research.

Many Tibet scholars are already aware of John Vincent Bellezza's broad and detailed archaeological surveys of the Tibetan plateau[1] and his earlier work on pairs of sacred mountains and lakes in the Byang thang area.[2] Based on those publications most will no doubt agree that it will be difficult to find a scholar better introduced to the material culture, myth and folklore of North-western Tibet. Therefore we are very pleased to include in BTSL Bellezza's most recent scholarly work, *Spirit-mediums, Sacred Mountains and Related Bon Textual Traditions in Upper Tibet*, which, as the title indicates, examines the ubiquitous phenomenon of spirit mediums in these upper regions of North-western Tibet that Bellezza knows so intimately.

The book's underlying thesis is one that forms a *Leitmotiv* in most of Bellezza's work. It is the assumption of continuities in present-day local religious practices and lore—in this case of spirit mediums—with earlier strata of culture, which are variously qualified by the author as "indigenous Tibetan" and "pre-Buddhist". Following general perception, Bellezza identifies Bon as a privileged carrier of archaic indigenous relics into present-day culture. It is a thesis that has frequently been voiced in Tibetan studies, but its substantiation, due to a lack of data (and particularly the reliable dating thereof),

[1] *Antiquities of Northern Tibet, Pre-Buddhist Archaeological Sites on the High Plateau (Findings of the Changthang Circuit Expedition, 1999)*, Delhi 2001, and *Antiquities of Upper Tibet, Pre-Buddhist Archaeological Sites on the High Plateau (Findings of the Upper Tibet Circumnavigation Expedition, 2000)*, Delhi 2002.

[2] *Divine Dyads, Ancient Civilization in Tibet*, Dharamsala 1997.

in tantalising ways has managed to remain out of reach. And even though at this point our state of knowledge may still preclude a definite judgement on the precise nature and extent of those apparent continuities, Bellezza, while aware of these limitations—particularly of the sketchy chronological framework—here nonetheless presents the best case possible for a survival of 'indigenous Tibetan culture' in the phenomena studied, and in the process he provides us with a veritable treasure trove of data. Based on Bellezza's detailed arguments, the reader will be able to draw his own conclusions. While some will feel inclined to follow his working hypotheses, others may remain unconvinced or may even prefer to draw other conclusions.

Herein resides a great asset of the present study. Beyond its theses and their detailed argumentation, its descriptive and analytical detail provides a vast compendium, previously almost entirely unknown, of ethnographic, 'material', textual and oral data. Since the author clearly identifies his position, because of this scholarly integrity, he is able to facilitate the reader who feels so inclined to attempt his own investigation, inquiry, and conclusions, based on the data provided. In other words, the research materials will be of considerable and lasting value, whether one feels inclined to agree with the author's point of departure and conclusions or not; or, if I may be permitted to phrase that in the author's own words: "I have elected to minimise theoretical design in favour of descriptive analysis for the simple reason that I see the process of chronicling all-important at this juncture in Tibetan history. I am therefore, applying much of my energy to the careful documentation of cultural and archaeological materials in the field".

Bellezza provides much evidence for the Buddhist appropriation of lore surrounding spirit mediums in upper Tibet, implicitly presupposing non-Buddhist strata that, over a long period and no doubt in various ways, were affected by the influx and establishment of Buddhist culture in Tibet. When constructing his argument in this way, Bellezza at the same time opens it up to further inquiry (by others) into the possibility of invention or redefinition of 'indigenous culture', particularly in its supposedly privileged relation to Bon. Indeed, the data provided may not only allow positing a Buddhist appropriation of the phenomena described but also appropriation by Bonpos, and *per se* do not force us to prioritize one tradition as (closer to) an archaic stratum that the other transforms. Much will of course depend on one's frame of reference.

As is well known, in this context supporting evidence from the earliest sources (Dunhuang) is fragile, usually unspecific, fragmentary and ambiguous, occasionally heavily dependent on interpretation; indeed, the preponderant and at the same time most pregnant and eloquent literary evidence for 'an indigenous past' in fact turns out to be remarkably late; while oral data in this context must remain of uncertain date. Adducing later literary evidence of course invites questions regarding the precise (timeframe and context of) formation and provenance of these sources, which in turn may reflect on the perceived nature of the investigated phenomena. When queried, literary sources may reveal as much (if not more) about the time and context in which they have developed as (than) they may reveal about the 'early indigenous culture' that they are presumed to refer to or thought to have preserved relics of.

These are crucial questions that remain to be answered—and partly also asked—in future research projects. Possibly forthcoming answers will doubtlessly lead to fresh questioning on these lines. A close examination of the phenomena studied and the data adduced for their further elucidation, with a particular focus on their formation as datable cultural artefacts and on the architecture of their meta-narratives, may reveal a great deal about the dialogic nature of the formation of Bon and Buddhist traditions in the area and perhaps also result in a new understanding of the perceived references to 'indigenous Tibetan culture' or the appropriation thereof.

I should like to stress that it is not my main intention here to highlight alternate approaches and future tasks as such, but to explicate the sincere appreciation that ilk considerations—and there may be many others—would not have been possible at this point, had Bellezza not facilitated them by gathering his data and aligning them in a transparent way with his theses.

Wherever future research in this area may take us, I am convinced that Bellezza's book will be read with great and lasting scholarly interest and I should also like to express the sincere wish, no doubt also on behalf of the author, that this study may for long engender the scholarly discussion that has proven so vital to the construction of academic knowledge. I should like to conclude by complementing the author with this truly impressive achievement.

Henk Blezer
CNWS, Leiden 2005

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PART ONE: GENERAL ORIENTATION

i) *Introduction to the spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet*

On the loftiest reaches of the Tibetan plateau are a small group of extraordinary men and women who carry out the most ancient of esoteric practices. They are the vehicles of the gods, the spirit-mediums for the ancestral and protective deities. Still today, in perilous rites of possession, the spirit-mediums claim to call down the gods while purging their own egos, and in thought, word and deed become the very embodiment of these supernatural beings. Their revelations are believed to vitally join the divinities and society together in a pact of mutual benefit and understanding, which has left a lasting mark on the religions of Tibet. This primeval impulse, of people becoming gods, is one of the pillars on which the Tibetan system of religious beliefs and rituals was founded.

This work examines the spirit-mediums that hail from the vast upper regions of northwest Tibet.[1] The spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet, both men and women, serve as the incarnate form of the region's chief mountain gods, as well as a range of other divinities. It is believed that when the consciousness of these deities enters the spirit-mediums the latter act and speak on their behalf. It is commonly held in Upper Tibet, that under the possession of the gods, the spirit-mediums heal sick people and livestock, exorcise evil spirits, bring good fortune to those struck by bad luck, and predict the outcome of future events. Local inhabitants have sought their services for centuries, and some spirit-mediums have taken up their vocation on the Subcontinent, in exile.

This work demonstrates that the spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet are locally important religious and medical practitioners with a long legacy of tradition behind them. The significance of the spirit-mediums therefore lies not only in the richness of their practice and

[1] This Upper Tibet territory comprises the overlapping areas known as sTod and Byang-thang. These areas now constitute the prefecture of mNga' ris, and parts of the Nag-chu, Lhasa and gZhis-ka-rtse prefectures of the Tibet Autonomous Region.

the many curiosities associated with it, but in the historical depths it discloses. Of all the traditional professions still surviving in Upper Tibet spirit-mediumship is the one that best exemplifies the remaining non-Buddhist culture of the region. In the course of this study of spirit-mediums we will open a window onto the vista of Upper Tibetan culture, revealing a multidimensional inheritance that has indelibly imprinted Tibet's Buddhism. Over the centuries, these native and Buddhist aspects of local culture have merged to form the tradition of spirit-mediumship now found in the region.

The non-Buddhist and primarily indigenous heritage of Upper Tibet reflects patterns of belief, ritual and tradition that developed prior to or independent of the Buddhist cultural patrimony. As this work will repeatedly make evident, according to views widely held in the Bon religion, the antecedents of this heritage extend far into the past. In the Bon view, the spirit-mediums divulge a traditional mode of living expression at variance with the Indian Buddhism that has so come to dominate Tibet. In other words, the spirit-mediums are vibrant testimony to an alternative or Bon paradigm of Tibetan culture, one that is conceived of as being anchored in the pre-Imperial history of the Plateau. While pre-Imperial origins for this cultural phenomenon cannot be adduced with the ethnographic and textual materials at our disposal, it is clear that many aspects of spirit-mediumship reflect an indigenous orientation. That is to say, the deities they call down are wedded to the Upper Tibetan landscape, flora and fauna, and their costumes and rituals exploit local produce and products.

I have chosen to designate those who act as human vessels for the deities 'spirit-mediums' because this term most accurately sums up their central activity: the ability to embody or be mediums for a host of different spirits. According to the testimonies of the spirit-mediums, this mediumship occurs at the flight of their normal consciousness and personality, and subsequent colonization of their mind and body by the summoned host deity. This mediumistic function is the basis of their profession and serves to distinguish them from other types of Tibetan religious practitioners. I have avoided the use of the term 'shaman', which is sometimes employed to describe similar religious functionaries in various cultures, because of its uncritical usage in popular parlance. This term is also used in scholarly literature to describe highly disparate cultural phenomena worldwide, thus its signification has become modifiable in accordance with the

needs at hand. When the spirit-mediums perform divination or make utterances about the future they could also correctly be described as oracles, but this term does not convey their more important curative and restorative functions.

Drawing upon a wide range of ethnographic and textual materials to investigate the phenomenon of spirit-mediumship in Upper Tibet, this work analyses the way in which its mythic, historical and present day characteristics are interrelated. The alleged continuity of this tradition over many centuries, and the way in which this is supposed to have been fostered, is the underlying theme that gives this book its narrative and analytical coherence.

This is a Tibetological work that focuses on the culture and traditions of the spirit-mediums and is therefore based primarily on Tibetan textual and oral sources. I have ultilized a diachronic perspective based on a comparison of the legendary and contemporary components of the tradition of spirit-mediumship. These past and present-day facets are enshrined in both the oral and literary traditions. This work therefore is modeled upon an ethnohistory, however, the data at my disposal does not permit the vigorous application of the methodologies relied upon by this discipline. The historically ambiguous nature of many of the materials presented means that a corroboratory chronology to serve as a benchmark for ethnohistorical discourse is largely lacking. As such, this work might be best described as a legendary history of spirit-mediumship in Upper Tibet, one that is derived from the relevant corpus of written documents and oral traditions.

From the few extant literary sources, we will examine the fabulous origins of the spirit-medium profession. This work also includes a general study of texts that elucidate the deities, ritual practices and ceremonial equipment of the spirit-mediums. I have elected to base most of my research on Bon texts because it is this religion that squarely claims the tradition of spirit-mediumship (*lha-bzhugs*) as its own. According to Bon tradition, Bon spirit-mediums were active in pre-Imperial times (what is also generally referred to as the pre-Buddhist period) prior to 630 CE. Other reasons why the Bon literary tradition is most applicable to this field of study is because by its own reckoning its ancient religious heartland was Upper Tibet, the region known as Zhang-zhung. Moreover, according to the Bon-po, many of the deities resorted to by the spirit-mediums were part of the archaic native tradition of this region. The Bon literary record

therefore, is uniquely suited as a heuristic tool to uncover the breadth and significance of the tradition of spirit-mediumship.

The deities and implements used by the spirit-mediums, and the rites and rituals that take place in their trance ceremonies, will be described in detail. This exposition is based on two major elements: 1) an elaboration of how the oral and literary traditions inform one another in the area of indigenous religious tradition; and 2) a portrayal of the pre-Imperial pedigree of spirit-medium culture in Bon historico-ritual notions (narratives presented as having a historical basis in Bon ritual literature). This work will also pay close attention to the vocational lineages (*lha-rgyud*) and the spirit-mediums' perceptions of what constitutes possession.

As this work is ethnographic and philological (the study and interpretation of literary texts) in nature, areas such as anthropological musings, social theory and ethno-psychiatry do not play a part. As valid as these alternative disciplines are to understanding the phenomenon of spirit-mediumship, especially as interpretive tools, they will have to await further inquiry. By compiling a descriptive work on the spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet, I hope to facilitate future study into the many curious matters that fall outside the ambit of this book. Subjects for further research include, among others, questions concerning the physiology of the trance state, the epistemology of possession, and the medical basis of the healing instrumentalities exploited by the spirit-mediums.

In Upper Tibet, male spirit-mediums are commonly referred to as *lha-pa* (god-carrier/god-man), *dpa' bo* (hero, also an epithet of sacred mountains), and *lha 'beb-mkhan/lha-babs-mkhan* (god-descending-one). Female mediums are called *dpa' mo* (heroine), *lha-mo* (god-woman) and *klu-mo* (water-serpent-woman). In this work, I have elected to apply the term *lha-pa* as the equivalent of a male spirit-medium (or simply medium) because it most appropriately describes the core activity of the profession; the embodiment of the deity. The eminent Tibetanist R.A. Stein (1972: 188) described the *lha-pa* and *klu-pa* (male mediums for the water spirits) as shepherds who serve as receptacles for local deities, which succinctly characterizes the practice in Upper Tibet.

In eastern Tibet, other terms for analogous spirit-mediums include *lha-kha* (god-mouth), *lha 'dzin* (god-possessed), *lha-zhon* (god-ridden), while *'dre 'dzin* refers to those afflicted by demonic possession—characterized by unwanted seizures, convulsions and super normal strength

(Ekvall 1964: 273). In festivals renewing the annual link between the *phywa* mountain deities and communities in Bhutan and rTa-dbang, men from the most influential families, called *lha-mi* (god-men), embody these deities (Pommaret 1996: 52).

Lha-pa, the mouthpieces of the gods, are most often depended upon for healing and divination (cf. Ekvall 1964: 27, 273). Their perceived ability to effectively arbitrate between the gods and community seems to explain their persistence over time. Their widespread, integrated presence in the pastoral communities of Upper Tibet is best seen as reflecting the long-term success of the *lha-pa*. They are attributed with providing essential remedial services, healing the physically and mentally ill, and giving guidance to those embarking on long trips and new business ventures. Moreover, they provide these services in a rather egalitarian manner where the remuneration received in goods or services is dependent on the inclination and financial means of the patient or client. In other words, there are not fixed rates for their exertions, permitting people of all socioeconomic rungs to avail themselves of their services. This utilitarian factor helps to explain their continued survival in Upper Tibet despite 50 years of Communism, which views such reliance on deities as superstitious and anti-modern. Aside from practicing as spirit-mediums, the *lha-pa* are engaged in animal husbandry and trade like other herders. This is an indication that they only receive a supplemental income from their specialized religious activities.[2]

Under-developed and politically neglected pre-Communist Upper Tibet was a particularly conducive environment for the spirit-mediums, and every district had at least one or two of them. There were relatively few monasteries in Upper Tibet and these could be located scores of miles from the settlements of the herders, thus vital assistance from the clergy was not always available. Likewise, there were not enough professional medical practitioners (*Em-chi/sman-pa*) to cater to the health needs of the population. The *lha-pa's* services therefore acted as a substitute to those of the lamas and doctors. In some

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[2] It is not known whether the altruistic fashion in which services are offered by the contemporary spirit-mediums was always the norm. In earlier times, when the *lha-pa* were endowed with far more prestige and power, more socially exploitative transactions may also have prevailed. It is reported that the fees of many of the high-status *sku-rten* (oracle-priests) of central Tibet, in the pre-Communist period were very considerable for ordinary people (Nebesky Wojkowitz 1956: 455).

cases, however, so highly respected were the *lha-pa* that they were actively sought out as an alternative to other types of religious and medical practitioners. They had the unique advantage of being culturally invested with the legitimacy of acting and speaking on behalf of the deities. As the gods came alive through them, they represented one of the most tangible and immediate forms of religious tradition in Tibet. Highly proficient spirit-mediums were held in awe; tales of their exploits spread throughout the locale and beyond. Invariably, the great *lha-pa* of past generations were attributed supernatural powers. Their magical abilities are commonly thought to have extended to riding on the backs of wild animals, flying in the sky, and incredible feats of healing and strength.

Probably the first scholarly description of Tibetan spirit-mediums is found in Sarat Chandra Das's 1882 work *Contributions on the Religion and History of Tibet* (p. 11). This involves Bon priests who invoke and are then possessed by a tutelary deity referred to as *bka' bab*[3] and *thab-lha* (god of the hearth). While under the influence of the gods, the medium is led to a defiled hearth where he plants a *mda' dar* (festooned arrow), thereby ridding it of the disease-causing contamination. Das notes that sullying the hearth angers the subterranean *sa-bdag* spirits, a belief with much currency still today. Another late Victorian work on Tibetan culture furnishes a more detailed description of the *lha-pa* (called *lha-kha/lha-bka'*) (Waddell 1895: 482–483). In this account, which generally holds true for today's spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet, they function to relieve pain. In their practice they place one end of a festooned arrow on the afflicted area of the patient and suck with the mouth on the other side, thus expelling the demon from this part of the body. The *lha-pa* are described as wearing a mirror over the heart and the five-lobed *rigs-lnga* headdress of mystic [Vajrayana] Buddhism. Waddell relates that at the beginning of the trance ceremony Gu-ru rin-po-che and the Buddha are invoked. First to appear at the trance is the tutelary deity who brings the *klu* and *'dre* spirits with him. The spirit-medium also offers incense and libations to the *yul-lha* (god of the locale), which appears in the *lha-pa's* mirror.

[3] This may refer to the god Phu-wer, the tutelary deity of the ancient Bon tradition of *ye-dbang lha yi bka' bab/babs* (commands of the god of primordial power). For a detailed description see Part Four, section ii, pp. 348–350.

By their own admission, the spirit-mediums, through the displacement of their consciousness (*rnam-shes*),[4] actually become the incarnate form of the deity. They claim that their personal identity is substituted for that of the deity, thus their speech and bearing become that of the deity (cf. Ekvall 1964: 273, 274). Furthermore, it is averred that just split seconds before bodily entry, the consciousness of the *lha-pa* exits and is replaced by that of a deity. The possession of the spirit-medium is referred to as *lha 'bab-pa* (deity descending) and *lha-bzhugs* (deity residing), and is marked by radical changes in speech and comportment. Typically, possession occurs after the necessary invocations and offerings have been made to the various gods. Under the influence of a deity, the *lha-pa* commonly exhibit profuse perspiration, signs of great physical strain, extraordinary strength, seizures, foaming at the mouth, and disappearance of the irises in the back of the head. Many of the remedial or helping spirits of the trance take the forms of eagles, owls, bear, wolves, tigers and foxes, and under their possession the *lha-pa* behaves in a like manner. The spirit-mediums make calls and cries like animals and imitate their movements and actions. They growl like tigers and bears, howl like wolves and cry out like raptors. The helping spirits therefore, can often be identified by observers through the outward behavior of the spirit-medium.

As a *lha-pa* is widely believed to have become the deity, at the end of the trance there is no recollection of what transpired during it. He or she usually has an assistant, a close friend or family member, who will relate what happened in the séance (the period in which the possessing deity was present). This assistant also helps in the ceremony, bringing whatever offerings or objects the deity calls for, and helping to translate its utterances. The voice of the deity is not always comprehensible to those in attendance because of unusual voice modulations, indistinct enunciation and low amplitude. Also the deities sometimes speak in foreign languages such as *lha-skad* (language of the gods), which can only be interpreted by those of long association with the *lha-pa*.

It is generally accepted that a true *lha-pa* can only be host to one consciousness at a time. It is usually imagined that at the moment

[4] The long form is *rnam-par shes-pa*, a word of Sanskrit origin (*vijñana*). Alternatively, some spirit-mediums believe that their consciousness principle is the *bla* (soul) or *thugs* (mind).

of possession his own consciousness is transferred to a metal mirror (*me-long*), where it remains in the protective embrace of a tutelary deity until the end of the trance ceremony. Spirit-mediums maintain that the personal consciousness exits from the top of the head while that of the deity (commonly referred to as *'od-zer*) enters the spirit-medium through other parts of the head or hands. Moreover, it is thought that when the possessing deity exits from the spirit-medium's body, the personal consciousness returns in the same manner as it had exited. Whilst in the body of the *lha-pa*, the deity's consciousness is said to dwell in the invisible channels spread throughout living organisms; these are known as *rtsa*. In Tibetan medical theory these subtle channels give rise to nervous impulses and are responsible for the transmission of consciousness and sensory data. It is not unusual for more than one deity to be involved in a trance ceremony. In that case, the deities are reported to wait in the *me-long* for one another to leave the spirit-medium before the next one takes possession.

As we shall see in Part Two, according to most spirit mediums, the origins of the *lha-pa* can be traced to Gu-ru rin-po-che, the Eighth century Vajrayana adept. He is said to have initiated four lineages of spirit-mediums, spanning the four cardinal directions of Tibet. Senior spirit-mediums affirm that these lineages have continued to the present day in the unbroken transmission of their profession. However, the Buddhist origin of spirit-mediumship in the oral tradition of Upper Tibet is probably apocryphal, reflecting the syncretism of the great Tibetan mythos. I embrace the view that this probable remodeling of mythology is the result of a historical revisionism (in both the literary and oral tradition), which occurred in the transition from pre-existing religious systems to Buddhism. In this context, the Buddhacization of spirit-mediumship in Upper Tibet appears to be one strand in the reorganization of, and estrangement from, antecedent religious tradition.

As shall be discussed in detail in Part Four, Bon legendary material purports that mediumistic cultural phenomena pre-date the Eighth century Gu-ru rin-po-che. From a comparative perspective, this seems entirely feasible as cultures throughout the ancient world relied on oracles and mediums for various religious and social functions, as do the world's remaining subsistence tribes. I am of the opinion that Bon literature and the Upper Tibetan oral tradition do indeed preserve to varying degrees of integrity myths, practices and traditions (such as those involving spirit-mediumship), which pre-date the introduction of Buddhism onto the Plateau. As archaeological evidence mounts for the existence of a sophisticated sedentary culture in Upper Tibet in pre-Imperial times, I am inclined to see this data as supporting Bon historical and ritual conceptions about the relative antiquity of their religion and culture. This antiquity however, cannot be established as a historical fact from the literary and oral sources presented in this work, and must perforce remain the author's hypothesis. While it is clear that cultural continuity between the pre-Buddhist and Buddhist periods cannot be posited using the philological and anthropological methodologies at our disposal, I hasten to add that this does not disprove the cultural antiquity of spirit-mediumship, or even render it unlikely.

In Parts Two to Five, I examine numerous cultural and religious traditions that are largely non-Buddhist in nature and indigenous in orientation. In this context, indigenous tradition can be defined as that which sprung up or was redeveloped in Tibet, while the term non-Buddhist adverts religious content that falls outside the bounds of popular and canonical Buddhism. The indigenous or native tradition is inextricably related to the Tibetan physical environment and the living creatures that reside in it. The cults of the divine yak and ancestral mountain gods are two examples of indigenous culture among many that I explore, utilizing the oral and literary records of Upper Tibet. As we shall see, Bon categorically maintains that many of the indigenous traditions treated in this work originated in the Bon of the pre-Imperial period. This begs the question: if native tradition does not, at least in part, derive from early or precursory forms of Bon as the pre-Imperial religion of Upper Tibet, what perchance was the makeup of the culture and religion of the region?

I uphold that it is not warranted to assume that the Tibetan plateau proto-tribal cultures of pre-Imperial times were fully divorced from all currently circulating cultural materials. To do so would effectively deny Tibet's distinctive identity (with its attendant unique ethnic and linguistic components), essentially seeing it instead as a historical offshoot of an Indian or other neighboring civilization. Alternatively, one might argue that all traces of Tibetan pre-Imperial cultures were annihilated. Both of these conclusions, of a historical Tibet with no antecedents or direct links to a largely indigenous paleoculture, appear nonviable to me. Yet, even if we are willing to entertain the possibility that Bon literature and the oral tradition encapsulate pre-Imperial cultural materials, questions of which ones

and in what form loom large. These are exceedingly difficult to answer and will remain so until new sources of textual and archaeological information become available for analysis.

Regarding the cultural orientation of Tibet, I present the standpoint that a reconfiguration of its historical discourse, resulting from an obscuring and dissolution of early religious and mythic forms, caused Tibetans to become ever more remote from their pre-Imperial cultural heritage. The cultural history of Tibet over the last millennium would seem to testify to a relentless suppression, assimilation and reconstruction of antecedent legacies in an effort to bring them in compliance with Buddhist sensibilities and tradition. This holds true for both Buddhists and Bon-po despite the latter viewing themselves as the legitimate successors of pre-Imperial culture. This assembling over the centuries of Buddhist-inspired ideas about cultural history and identity can only have been a highly complex process, involving popular social changes, political conditioning and the engineering of the literary record. In must also be pointed out that the formation of a dialectic about cultural development could not have been a uniform or linear process but rather a variable phenomenon—reflecting myriad geographical, sectarian and temporal contexts. Returning to Upper Tibet, we find evidence of these potential cultural historical developments in the following three main areas:

1) Buddhacization of the indigenous pantheon and ritual practices.
2) Concocted Gu-ru rin-po-che, Ge-sar epic and foreign occupation legends woven around many pre-Buddhist archaeological sites and sacred geographic entities.[5]
3) The loss of clan-based traditions and social organization.

Historically, the earliest references to mediums and the gods revealing themselves through the mouth of humans (*lha-bka'*), both male and female, appear to be found in the Tun-huang manuscripts written circa the Eighth or Ninth century (Stein 1972: 232). In *Pelliot 1047*, a divination manuscript, there is mention of elderly female mediums for the nine *mu-sman* sisters (mountain and lake goddesses), who could predict the future and prescribe funerary rites for the

[5] The Buddhacization of the indigenous pantheon of Upper Tibet is a theme found in Bellezza 1997. For the legends and myths surrounding pre-Buddhist archaeological sites in Upper Tibet see Bellezza 2001; 2002a.

deceased (Macdonald 1971: 274, 275, 294, 295).[6] In Bon quasi-historical literature, *lha-bka'* is assigned to a Bon-po specialist in divination from Bru-sha (Gilgit), who was one of three *gshen* priests summoned to carry out the funerary rites for the slain Gri-gum btsan-po, the eighth king of Tibet (Stein 1972: 232). This account places the practice of spirit-mediumship 25 dynastic generations before the first major introduction of Buddhism in Tibet during the reign of King Srong-btsan sgam-po. Like so many other attestations made in the literature however, we have no means at our disposal to verify the historicity of this claim.

Lha-bka' as an oracular function is possibly represented in the Tun-huang manuscript *Pelliot 126*. This text records a conversation between two lordly figures belonging to the dMu and Phywa, who were very important proto-tribes of Tibet. It is not clear however, whether these two individuals represent gods or men. The discourse they hold with one another appears to be related to the acquisition of a tribal deity by the Phywa. In order to obtain a protective deity, the dMu is entreated with complementary words and feted with various offerings. In one excerpt, the Phywa lord requests the directives of the deity but it is not certain whether this is an allusion to an oracular event or a kingly decree. If indeed these passages describe a divine prophecy and are not culturally unexampled, they seem to point to the existence of a well-established institution of spirit-mediumship in the Imperial period (617 to 846). The account begins with the speech of the dMu and ends with that of the Phywa who appears to have a proper name in the text:[7]

[6] In a Buddhist polemical attack on female practitioners called *bon-mo* found in a Tun-huang manuscript (India Office 220) it notes that they make prophecies and extort people to carry out animal sacrifices to spirits such as the *lha, 'dre* and *srin-mo* (Stein 2003: 593, 594).

[7] See Imaeda *et al.* 2000, *Pelliot 126*, lns. 0155–0159. As the many uncertainties in the Tun-huang manuscripts related to grammar, vocabulary and syntax remain unresolved, the translation provided here must be viewed only as an approximation of the intended import of the passages. The excerpt reads: *bdag cag ngan pa mchis pa dang gi gdugs la / 'di 'dra ba'i bka' lung gnyan po g.yar du stsal pa yang / g.yar tshod ma mchis / bdag cag kyi (= gi) yab khu dag kyang ma rdzogs / yab khu dag dang bka' gros bgyis la / de nas khyed cag la bka' lung dag sbyin gis (= gyis) / sku gnyen 'phrul gyi zha (= zhal) snga nas / deng gi gdugs la gor bu'i zhabs tshegs la ma gzigs te gdan gshegs su gnang ba glo ba dga' bdag cag ngan pa lha zhal tsam mthong / lha bka' nyan cing mchis na / bka' stsal pa tsam du ci gnang /.*

"... We the humble ones have come here today. You have requested such essential *bka' lung*[8] but please do not avail upon me. Our father and paternal uncle have not come. We will consult with our father and paternal uncle. Then we will give you the *bka' lung.*" sKu-gnyen 'phrul said, "I am very happy that you came here today without caring about the difficulty faced by your horse. I the humble one have seen the face of the god. I am obeying the *lha-bka'*.[9] Please confer upon me the *bka'*."

There are scant but tantalizing descriptions of early mediumistic activities set in the pre-Imperial period in later Bon ritual texts as well. In a 14th century account of the Phya-gshen theg-pa, the first vehicle or system of teachings taught by the founder of the Bon religion, gShen-rab, mention is made of an oracular tradition called *ye-dbang lha yi bka' babs* (mantic directives of the god of primordial power), which was revealed through the *gshen* religious adepts (see fn. 3). According to Bon tradition, this revelatory tradition was one of four systems of divination used in pre-Imperial times to formulate the prognosis of patients. The class of Bon gods who spoke through the ancient mediums is believed to have been the *srid-pa'i sgra-bla*, which in personality, appearance and the manner they are entreated, closely resemble the powerful mountain gods used by the *lha-pa* of today. Bon doctrinal assertions about the types of deities the contemporary mediums depend on, their ceremonial equipment and the rituals they perform under possession, all suggest that they are close successors to this conceived pre-Imperial mediumistic tradition of *srid-pa'i sgra-bla*. If indeed this amounts to actual evidence of a historical continuity in the tradition of spirit-mediumship between the prehistoric and historic periods, the fact that Upper Tibet has clung on to so many other native customs and traditions[10] can be taken as associative evidence. It also must be noted that this Bon predicated continuity of tradition appears to be mirrored in the archaeological record of Upper Tibet. For example, archaic animal motifs in rock art[11] and *thog-lcags* (heterogeneous class of copper alloy

[8] It is not certain if *bka' lung/bka'* denotes the instructions or advice of a king, or whether it refers to a divine prophecy.

[9] In this context, *lha-bka'* refers either to the utterances or directives of a kingly figure, or the revelations of a deity.

[10] For a synoptic account of indigenous religious rituals and practices see Tucci 1980, pp. 163–212.

[11] For a survey of perdurable rock art motifs see Bellezza 2000; 2001, pp. 190–224; 2002a, pp. 125–147; 2002b.

artifacts) seem to have persisted well into the historic period, as possibly did early monumental architecture. Whatever their historical genesis, the cultural materials presented in this study indicate that the spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet retain one of the greatest proportions of native (if not atavistic) qualities still exhibited among Tibetan religious functionaries.

From a Bon doctrinal perspective, the pre-Imperial mediumistic legacy seems to survive, albeit in attenuated forms, among the *lha-pa* of Upper Tibet (most of whom are Buddhists). Nevertheless, there is no question among Tibetan observers, whatever their religious persuasion, that the spirit-mediums have been heavily influenced by Buddhist thought and the Buddhist pantheon. Buddhist culture has spread so deeply that most spirit-mediums perceive themselves as pursuing a tradition whose roots lie in Buddhism, scarcely recognizing the alternative Bon view of pre-Imperial cultural antecedents. The conceptions held by the spirit-mediums about the nature of possession, motivations for practicing, and the perceptions associated with its execution, have transformed the spirit-mediumship of Upper Tibet into a thoroughly Buddhist affair. It is envisioned and expressed in Buddhist language and fully exercised under Buddhist auspices. The mountain gods and other deities of possession are therefore not seen as vestiges of an olden tradition but rather as legitimate, oath-bound protectors of the Buddhist doctrine. Similarly, their costume and implements are not assigned a Bon identity but for the most part are viewed as part of the great Vajrayana tradition of Tibetan Buddhism. The only exception to this general state of Buddhist orchestrated practice is the spirit-mediums who adhere to Bon, but few remain in the Bon enclaves of Upper Tibet.[12]

In the remaining section of this general introduction to the spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet, I will summarize the salient features of their tradition and the perceptions they have regarding it. Detailed accounts of these topics are found in the interviews contained in Part Two of this work.

[12] Two of the Bon enclaves in Upper Tibet are sPo-che in gNam-ru (dPal-mgon county) and Dang-ra g.yu-mtsho in Nag-tshang (Nyi-ma county). See Bellezza 1997; 2001 for information on these areas. Among the last Bon-po spirit-mediums of Dang-ra g.yu-mtsho was a woman named Sri-thar sgrol-ma (Bellezza 1997: 318, 319). It is reported that she passed away circa 2000.

In its original form as conceived by the Bon-po, the tradition of spirit-mediumship in Upper Tibet appears to have solely depended on the pantheon of spirits bound in the physical environment such as the *lha, btsan, gnyan* and *klu*, as well as related protective deities called *sgra-bla*. In its present Buddhist-influenced configuration, spirit-mediums in Upper Tibet customarily rely on several types of divinities to accomplish trance states. These deities of the contemporary trance ceremony are arranged in as many as five hierarchical tiers, and in descending order of status and importance include:

1) *Yi-dam* (enlightened tutelary deities).
2) *'Jig rten las 'das pa'i srung-ma* (protective deities that have passed beyond the sphere of worldly existence) and *mkha' 'gro-ma* (benefactress deities).
3) *Lha-ri* (chief mountain gods) and *lha-mtsho* (chief lake goddesses).
4) (*Lha-ri*) *'khor-bcas* (members of the retinue of the mountain gods), *btsan* (martial spirits of mountains) and (*lha-mtsho*) *'khor bcas* (members of the retinue of lake goddesses).
5) Remedial or ancillary servant spirits in anthropomorphic and zoomorphic form.

In addition to these deities, as with other Tibetan religious phenomena, the omniscient Buddha himself is thought to be present at the trance ceremonies as a kind of witness who exerts a salubrious influence. My research indicates that the first two hierarchical tiers of deities are present at every trance ceremony due to the indispensable nature of their work. The deities of the three latter categories vary from trance to trance, although in practice the *lha-pa* have several gods that they are most acquainted with. With some exceptions, before the onset of the trance, it is not known which god and entourage will possess the spirit-medium. Typically, his or her identity is learned when the deity announces its presence to those in attendance at the ceremony.

The *yi-dam* are usually the deified early masters of Vajrayana Buddhism, Gu-ru rin-po-che and the *grub-chen/grub-thob* (*mahasiddha*). They oversee the proceedings of the trance and take special care of the health and personal integrity of the *lha-pa*. They are in essence, the patrons of the ceremony. The *yi-dam* are usually the deities that the spirit-mediums worship in the normal course of their religious observances. The spirit-mediums state that all other deities of the trance are subservient to them in terms of power and ability, and must heed their spiritual guidance and advice. Mirroring Buddhist practice, the Bon-po *lha-pa* of Upper Tibet possibly had tutelary gods such as Ge-khod and Me-ri, but there is little documentary evidence of this remaining.

Below the *yi-dam* in importance are the protective deities, which according to Bon and Buddhist theology, have passed beyond transmigratory existence. They are often referred to as *bstan-srung* (protectors of the doctrine), *bka' srung* (protectors of the teachings) and *chos-skyong* (defenders of religion). The most popular ones of the spirit-mediums are the great Tibetan protectress dPal-ldan lha-mo and the various black protectors known as mGon-po (Mahakala). The Bon-po spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet probably had divinities like Srid-pa'i rgyal-mo or sTag-la me 'bar as their protective counterparts.[13] As we shall see, in some cases these protectors represent the *lha-pa*'s household or family protective deity. The *lha-pa* believe that the protector deities defend their interests and those of their patients and clients. The mediums allege that they prevent demonic entities from interfering in the trance ceremony, and guard against the infection of the *lha-pa* by the evil spirits and contaminated substances they must handle while carrying out healing activities. It is also commonly attested that the protective deities collaborate with the chief possessing deities and help them to accomplish their mission. The higher deities, while playing an essential role in the trance ceremony, do not possess the spirit-mediums. They rather work from the outside, as it is customarily believed that no mere human being could withstand their bodily invasion.

Another group of deities that have the same or a slightly lower status than the high protectors are the *mkha' 'gro*, the group of wisdom-bearing goddesses in the Vajrayana tradition. From the various accounts of the *lha-pa*, they are best described as the benefactresses of the trance ceremony, responsible for the physical and mental well-being of the *lha-pa*. At the trance ceremony they have an active role

[13] I base my observation on the fact that celebrated Buddhist *phugs-lha* (family protectors) are identical to the protectors of the spirit-mediums. My research demonstrates that in the Bon enclaves of Upper Tibet, most *phugs-lha* are popular Bon protective deities such as Srid-pa'i rgyal-mo, A-bse, Mi-bdud, Hur-pa, and sTag-la me 'bar. It therefore seems most probable that these deities were likewise the protectors of Bon spirit-mediums.

monitoring the subtle channels of the spirit-medium's body, not to mention the integrity of his headdress and costume. They are also said to serve as hostesses, welcoming and situating the other deities participating in the trance who appear from all directions. The caretaking consciousness of the *mkha' 'gro* surrounds the spirit-medium for the duration of the trance. It is generally held that the *mkha' 'gro* do not usually enter inside the spirit-medium's body. According to the spirit-mediums however, they are a source of much reassurance, as quite a leap of faith is needed to abandon one's body to a foreign entity.

The chief mountain gods (*lha-ri*)[14] found in the pantheon of many of the spirit-mediums are gNyan-chen thang-lha and rTa-rgo dge-rgan.[15] These are two of the most powerful mountain gods in Upper Tibet. My researches show that with the possible exception of the mightiest of *lha-pa*, they do not deign to possess the bodies of humans. These archetypal father figures and ancestral deities are white in color and ride white steeds. They are believed to function to uphold the best interests of the spirit-mediums and patients alike. It is said that they usually manage the activities of the trance from the sidelines, yet they are aware of everything that is happening. I employ the analogy of a military operation to describe their actions: like generals on the battlefield, they direct their large armies of subsidiary forms and servants to carry out specific procedures on the patient's behalf. The *lha-ri* gNyan-chen thang-lha and rTa-rgo dge-rgan are closely tied with their mates, gNam-mtsho and Dang-ra g.yu-mtsho respectively. These lake deities sometimes participate in the séance as well, along with their vast entourages.

Among the spirit-mediums (as in Tibetan doctrinal assertions), the *lha-ri* and *lha-mtsho* are conceived of as worldly spirits (*'jig rten-pa'i lha*), and if angered can become indisposed towards someone. In this case, they are believed to have the power to harm people and animals and even unleash plagues. If such a situation has developed, Tibetans traditionally feel that it is the *lha-pa*'s intervention that can restore the balance between the *lha-ri* and patient, thereby effecting a cure. Ancient lake goddesses such as gNam-mtsho phyug-mo and

[14] For a general description of the *lha* see Tucci 1949, p. 720.
[15] For a comprehensive review of the textual and oral-based traditions pertaining to these deities and their large retinues see Bellezza 1997.

Dang-ra g.yu-mtsho, and their retinue of *sman* and *klu-mo* spirits, also possess certain spirit-mediums. Other patronizing female deities are related to dPal-ldan lha-mo and may represent vestigial forms of goddesses who have all but lost their original identities. Tibetans commonly believe that many indigenous goddesses are either manifestations of dPal-ldan lha-mo or members of her huge retinue.

According to the spirit-mediums, the main subsidiary form of gNyan-chen thang-lha that possesses them is his son Thang-sras-mchor-po. He is popularly said to inhabit a sharp peak located just north of the Thang-lha massif. It is reported that Thang-sras mchor-po actually enters the *lha-pa* and discharges the work of healing or prognostication. These functions are also commonly carried out by rDo-rje rkyang-khra, a deity usually thought of as being a member of gNyan-chen thang-lha's circle of gods. His residence is well known to the *'brog-pa* (shepherds); an outcrop in a vast plain situated north of dPa' mtsho, in gNam-ru (dPal-mgon county). The lesser forms of rTa-rgo most often involved in possession are the *btsan* deities[16] Ngo-dmar lha-btsan and Gangs-lung lha-btsan, mountains located in the northern half of the rTa-rgo range. They have precisely the same function as Thang-sras mchor-po and rDo-rje rkyang-khra. I equate these deities with military officers who use the senses and body of the *lha-pa* to battle demons and harmful forces. They receive their orders from their corresponding *lha-ri*, which is also present at the séance but characteristically occupying a less intimate location outside of the spirit-medium.

A survey of the spirit-mediums shows that the other main possessing mountain gods are bTsan-rgod nam-ra, Rol-pa-skya-bdun and Gangs-ri lha-btsan, which also belong to the *btsan* class of protective deities. Spirit-mediums report that they act independent of the two chief *lha-ri* (Thang-lha and rTa-rgo), and when they are present at the trance ceremony the chief *lha-ri* are not, for they are affiliated to different territories and theogonies. Consequently, when these *btsan* deities are involved one of the five tiers of the divine hierarchy is effectively removed. The spirit-mediums are quick to point out however, that this has no bearing on the effectiveness of a *lha-pa* or the nature of his work.

[16] For a general description of the *btsan* see Tucci 1949, p. 719.

bTsan-rgod nam-ra, one of the most important *btsan* of the Byang-thang, is widely known to inhabit a black mountain in Bar-tha township, Nag-chu (Nag-chu county). Another important *btsan* is Gangs-ri lha-btsan the *gnas-bdag* (protector of a holy place) of the celebrated mountain Gangs rin-po-che/Gangs-dkar ti-se. There are reported to be several mountains across Upper Tibet occupied by the group of seven *btsan* known as Rol-pa skya-bdun. They include A-dmar rol-pa skya-bdun of sGer-rte, Da-dben rol-pa skya-bdun of gZhung-pa ma-mtshan, bKra-shis-do rol-pa skya-bdun of gNam-mtsho, and Thon-kha' rol-pa skya-bdun of Ra-bang. Some *'brog-pa* claim that all of these Rol-pa groups were once possessing deities of the spirit-mediums. There is also the deity Dam-can mgar-ba nag-po, the divine blacksmith, who also acts in the role of a mountain deity. According to many informants, his main mountain abode is located on the border of sGar-sde and sNye-mo, southwest of Thang-lha. In addition to the various mountain spirits, some *lha-pa* are possessed by A-stag klu-mo, a heroine of the Gling ge-sar epic, who is supposed to have been an ancient ruler of Yar-khams in Upper Tibet.

The possessing deities are thought to control a wide assortment of remedial spirits who belong to their retinues. These are generically referred to by the spirit-mediums as *grib-sbyong* (contamination cleaners) and by the roughly homonymous terms *'jibs-spyang* (sucking wolf) and *grib-spyang* (contamination wolf). They are the 'foot soldiers' that remove impurities from the body of patients, do battle with evil spirits and capture errant souls. As already noted, these helping spirits often assume zoomorphic forms. This peculiar class of deity can possibly be traced to an early period in the cultural development of Tibet. They are potentially represented in the prehistoric rock art of the region, which seems to include various theriomorphic figures, but at this time archaeological corroboration is lacking. Similar zoomorphic deities were also used by other kinds of Tibetan religious practitioners, and they themselves were sometimes transformed into animals. For example, in the 12th century quasi-historical Bon text *Rig 'dzin rig-pa'i thugs-rgyud*, the Zhang-zhung era adept gZing-pa mthu-chen manifested as a wolf in order to recover wandering souls (Bellezza 2001: 57, 58). In the biography of the Dol-po lama dPal-ldan blo-gros (1467–1563), it relates that the *yul-lha* (deity of the locale) Nam-stod, in the form of a sheep with a reddish brown face, helped him retrieve the soul of a sick person (Hazod 1996: 96). Likewise, a rare funerary manuscript of the Na-

khi of the southeastern Tibetan borderlands, records that the stolen soul of a priest was reclaimed with the aid of his white dog, a chicken, white crane, pig, black duck, bear, pheasant, and other animals (Rock 1972: 471, 472).

Spirit-mediumship in Upper Tibet has been kept alive by lineages of practitioners, nearly all of which are hereditary. The profession is inherited from both one's paternal and maternal ancestors. The most prominent spirit-mediums are thought to be heirs to lineages many generations old. In some cases, so great in length was this succession of forebears that the *lha-pa* claim it extends for nine or thirteen generations. In the Tibetan language, these numbers have acquired the import of 'many' or a 'multitude', and are metaphorically employed by the spirit-mediums to express a long-standing family tradition. Spirit-mediumship constituted one of the region's great oral traditions, and most of the *lha-pa* appear to have been illiterate. My research proves that they learned their techniques and acquired their deities through tutelage and not through book knowledge. In fact, it does not appear that a manual was ever written to teach aspiring *lha-pa* how to practice. To the contrary, this is not a vocation chosen voluntarily but foisted upon one by the deities themselves. The *lha-pa* hold that unless the deities specially select one, there is little chance of learning how to become their vehicle.

Without exception among those spirit-mediums interviewed, possession by the deities, especially in the first few years, is a traumatic experience that causes much distress; even mental and physical illness. Initially, there was always the anxiety that the possessing entity might be a demon instead of a bona fide god. It was explained to me that the family of the aspiring candidate usually called in a high lama to determine the nature of possession. The lama would bless the *lha-pa* and exhort him or her to lead a wholesome life so that the deities could find suitable temporary residence inside the body. The spirit-mediums note that in the event a person was under malevolent influences, an exorcism of the evil spirits was conducted. The initiation of a *lha-pa* could take up to several years and included Buddhist or Bon devotional practices, trance sittings and pilgrimage to holy places. In the pre-Communist period, lamas regularly tested spirit-mediums to see if their abilities were up to the grade.[17] This

[17] The initiation of a *lha-pa* under the auspices of a *btsan* deity called bTsan-rje

was sometimes carried out as part of a Lhasa government certification process. In the time of the 13th Dalai Lama, *lha-pa* were supposed to be required to seek approval from the government sponsored gNas-chung oracle. Only authentic spirit-mediums were given permission to practice, and they were required to make annual offerings to the gNas-chung oracle as a kind of tribute.[18]

ii) *The greater tradition: cross-cultural comparisons*

As has been noted (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956; Hoffman 1961), Tibetan religions contain certain elements in common with what are broadly called the shamanistic/shamanic religions of central and north Asia, the *locus classicus* of the shaman. However, the nature of these cultural parallels cannot be satisfactorily elucidated, due to the highly obscure historical and ethnological factors at play. At present, the agents of ethnohistorical formation involved do not readily lend themselves to scientific analysis.

As shown below, the practices and ritual implements of the *lha-pa* of Upper Tibet share many affinities with central and north Asian shamanism. In my view, the existence of these analogous traditions embedded in the substrate of cultures distributed over Inner Asia suggests that there are indeed deeply buried genetic linkages. Postulating an interrelated Inner Asian tradition of spirit-mediumship presupposes a high degree of cultural diffusion, and this was potentially effected through trade, conquest, intellectual exchange, and tribal assimilations over a period of no less then 3000 years (from the Eneolithic to Yuan dynastic period).

In earlier works, I have used comparative archaeological data to evince Iron Age cultural links between Upper Tibet and her northern neighbors.[19] My research indicates that archaeological assets with

snying-krung is described by Tucci (1980: 203, 204). It was conducted by a lay religious practitioner called a *sngags-pa* and entailed recovering a hidden *bla-rdo* (soul stone) for the purposes of divination. The *lha-pa* called *pra-rten* (support of divination) in order to be successful, had to see all the good and bad things in the world using his mirror.

[18] This information came from the current gNas-chung *sku-rten-pa* Thub-btsan dngos-grub, in personal communication.

[19] Paleocultural affinities between the pre-Buddhist archaeological heritage of Upper Tibet and the Scytho-Siberian archaeological record of Inner Asia are thoroughly examined in Bellezza 2002a.

similar morphological, constructional and design features, which are found in Upper Tibet, Mongolia and the Altai, can probably be traced to the Scytho-Siberian period of the First Millennium BCE. In religious historical terms, this temporally corresponds with the so-called pre-shamanistic period in central and northern Asia and the pre-Imperial period in Upper Tibet. These archaeological parallels however, do not necessarily confirm that the *lha-pa* and shamans of central and northern Asia are successors to a tradition sufficiently long-lived to be represented in an interrelated Iron Age cultural heritage. Unfortunately, parallel lines of cultural development and refusion for subsequent periods are no less abstruse. Albeit both types of practitioners are representative of well-established traditions, our search for historical ties between the *lha-pa* and shamans of central and north Asia is stymied by a lack of documentary evidence. Until the required breakthroughs in the fields of comparative archaeology and ethnohistory occur, we will not have the means in our grasp to accurately evaluate the analogous traditions of Upper Tibet and her northern neighbors.

Before we examine traditions that might be held in common by the *lha-pa* and their northern counterparts, let us place shamanism in a historical perspective. Strictly speaking, shamanism is a Turco-Mongolian cultural phenomenon involving various religious functionaries who refer to themselves as shamans.[20] In addition to healing and divination, the shamans of Central Asia and Siberia serve as psychopomps who escort the souls of the dead to the afterlife (Hultkrantz 1996: 9–11). In Tibetan religion, this later function as a guide of the dead has been entirely assumed by the Bon and Buddhist lamas. It is theorized that the roots of shamanistic ideology can be traced to the division of labor and the establishment of class societies, which in south Siberia occurred at the end of the Neolithic and the onset of the Metal Age (Second and First Millennium BCE) (Mikhajlov 1984: 100). It is thought by some specialists that an archaic pre-shamanistic religion spread widely among the Siberian

[20] For a general discussion of what constitutes a shaman in Asia see Lewis 1984; Gilberg 1984; Hultkrantz 1996. The term shaman is also used as a general term for highly disparate practices the world over, predicated on a disassociation of cultural context and the reduction of diverse linguistic, symbolic and historical systems into a single objectified phenomenon. For a critical discussion of this topic see Holmberg 1989, pp. 143–145; Hoppál 1992a, pp. 129–131.

aborigines, characterized by ancestor cults, hunting rituals, and the worship of mountain spirits and other natural objects (Taksami 1984: 451, 452). As regards certain shamanistic attributes, particularly ritual implements and costume, it would appear that they were part of the pre-Turk cultural substrate (Vajnštejn 1984: 367). However, the emergence of shamanism is difficult to gauge using archaeological evidence, as dead shamans and their ritual accouterments were often placed on raised platforms and subject to rapid decomposition (Jacobson 1993: 206–208). Nor does there exist a scholarly consensus on the application of rock art to the study of the origins of shamanism (Hoppál 1992b: 132–134). Archaic Siberian petroglyphs of horned and masked figures cannot be identified as shamans due to a lack of irrefutable archaeological evidence (Jacobson 1993: 206–208). In order to regard ancient petroglyphs as shamanistic one has to posit nebulous cultural associations. These entail viewing contemporary shamanism as heir to ancient Turco-Mongolian religious traditions and that these, in turn, can be understood in the context of Scytho-Siberian archaeological data (Francfort 1998: 313). Needless to say, the same types of cautions, regarding relating observable anthropological activity to archaeological evidence, apply in any attempt to compare Upper Tibetan rock art with the traditions of the *lha-pa*. Central Asian shamanism, as we now know it, is the result of widespread movements of the Huns, Turks, Khitans and Uighurs in Yuan times (Mikhajlov 1984: 97). It is a syncretistic phenomenon containing elements of early cults, which were affected by Buddhism, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism and other oriental religions (*ibid.*: 98). Although ethnically specific, strong similarities in shamanism exist in areas such as mythology, ritual, the structure and composition of the pantheon, and religious terminology (*ibid.*: 98, 99).

Despite not being able to elucidate the ethnological and historical factors that may have given rise to the various traditions shared by the *lha-pa* and shamans, it is important to enumerate these traditions in order to gain an appreciation of the degree of affinity that exists between these religious functionaries. These similarities in practice, ritual implements and deities, in functional terms, reflect wide-ranging traditions of deity possession. The shamanistic cultural groups noted in the next several paragraphs all hail from various areas of central and northern Asia. In the latter part of this section, I will undertake a comparative study of the *lha-pa* and their counterparts in other Tibetan regions and allied cultures. Coming closer afield to Upper Tibet many congruencies in spirit-mediumship are discernable. These parallels in Bodic tradition have both historical and ethnic dimensions.

The *me-long* (circular metal mirror), along with the drum and *gshang*, is the most important ritual implement of the *lha-pa*. It functions as the residence of the possessing deities and their retinue of remedial spirits, and as the abode of the spirit-medium's *rnam-shes* (consciousness), *bla* (soul) or *thugs* (mind) during the trance. Likewise, for the Nanai Shamans of Inner Asia brass mirrors (*toli*) served as the receptacle of their various spirits (Smoljak 1984: 246). Among those residing in the mirror were deer and dogs that dispatched souls to the land of the dead (*ibid.*: 245). The most prized Tibetan *me-long* are ancient specimens that are believed to have fallen from the sky, and are called *thog-lcags* (primordial/thunderbolt metal). These are handed down for generations in family lineages of *lha-pa*, or discovered in hidden places. More than 2000 years ago, brass mirrors spread throughout south Siberia (Smoljak 1984: 246) and likewise, were later highly coveted by groups of shamans in Central Asia and Siberia. Some shamans hung ancient bronze mirrors, which were considered a powerful protecting spirit, on their coats (Vajnštejn 1984: 365). In Mongolia, shamans wore metal mirrors (*toli*) with an apotropaic function fastened to their aprons, and on their chest and back (Heissig 1980: 19). Tibetan *lha-pa* often wear plain *me-long* or ones embossed with the Tibetan calendar on their chests for protective purposes.

An important implement of the *lha-pa* of Upper Tibet is the *mda' dar*, a festooned arrow used for attracting good fortune and exorcising demons. The Buryat shamans and other peoples of Siberia also used an arrow in various religious ceremonies (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 543, 544), as did the Mongolians for divination purposes (Śarkozi 1984: 331). In the hunting rituals of the Khitans (ruled northern China from 907–1125), the arrow symbolized the male, as is frequently found in Inner Asia (Baldick 2000: 6, 31), with Tibet being no exception. The Khitans also used the arrow in rituals to expel demons (Francke 1983: 11). Similarly, a celebrated instrument of both the *lha-pa* and shamans of Central Asia and Siberia is the drum. Siberian shamans have drum-skins made of consecrated deer-hide (Jacobson 1993: 176, 177), while drum-skins made of gazelle-hide and snake-skin are known among the spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet. Other analogies between the respective groups involve the use of raptor feathers in headdresses, and the burning of juniper incense. For example, the male and female shamans of Tuva stick eagle and owl feathers in their conical cap headdresses (Djakonova 1996: 158,

159, 163), while the spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet use a plume of vulture feathers in similarly shaped conical caps (*btsan-zhwa*).

Great feats of strength and magic have been attributed to both the spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet and their northern shaman counterparts. Among the *lha-pa* of Upper Tibet, it is common to divide their profession into three categories of ceremonial proficiency: superior, average and inferior. A congruous tradition was found among the Yakut shamans, who were divided into three categories: great, average and weak, judged by the amount of spirits under their control (Alekseev 1984: 269). The *lha-pa*, in conformance with an ancient Tibetan cosmological concept, divide the universe into three vertical spheres (*srid-pa-gsum*) Similarly, the Tuvans divided their universe into two or three vertically-oriented spheres (Vajnštejn 1984: 354). The Nanai also had a tripartite vertically-oriented universe (Okladnikov 1981: 19), as did the Yakuts (Hatto 1970: 10) and Evenks (Vasilevich 1963: 48, 49, 72). Another striking similarity between the *lha-pa* and shamans of Central Asia and Siberia is the general use of a sucking technique to remove impurities that cause diseases. Moreover, the vocation of shamans in Siberia is often hereditary, as it is among the *lha-pa* (cf. Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 549, 550). For divination the Evenki shamaness uses a device made of nine threads (Bulatova 1997: 240), while nine threads are used in the healing rituals of certain spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet.

The spirit-mediums practicing in Upper Tibet have mountain gods who serve as patrons and officiate over the trance ceremony, and subsidiary forms of mountain deities who actually possess them and carry out various functions. Khaka shamans also invoked mountain spirits during their rites for assistance and protection, and the Kumandin shamans could have their clan's mountain spirit as a patron deity (Alekseev 1984: 271, 272). Kachin shamans had mountain deities as helping spirits in both zoomorphic and anthropomorphic forms, including figures mounted on horses, white and black birds, wolves, bears, dogs, elk, chamois, frogs, snakes and lizards (*ibid.*: 272). Kizil shamans also seemed to have had helping spirits in the form of mountains and bodies of water (*ibid.*: 272). The Tuvan shamans had helping spirits (*ēren*) in the form of eagles, owls, falcons, bears and wolves.[21] The main function of the *ēren* was to protect humans

[21] See Vajnštejn 1984, p. 355; 1996, pp. 168, 169.

from the demons of disease, which could be expelled by the spirits of animals (Vajnštejn 1996: 168, 169). These iconographic forms and functions of the *ēren* are reflected in the helping spirits of the spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet as well. There is also common ground between the two geographic traditions of mediumship in the articulation of these helping spirits in the trance ceremony. The Tuvan shamans imitate the voices of a variety of animals including bears, wolves and eagles (Kenin-Lopsan 1997: 132), as do their counterparts in Upper Tibet. Among the shamans of Tuva, helping spirits were also the master-spirits of sacred mountains, and their costume symbolized a bird, which was probably a helping spirit (Alekseev 1984: 272, 275). Mountain remedial spirits in the form of raptors are likewise common among the Tibetan spirit-mediums. Various Turco-Mongolian groups such as the Kachins and Sagais believed that the mountain and clan spirits rode horses of different single colors (Potapov 1996: 112, 113), another tradition that finds resonance in Upper Tibet.

The possessing deities of the *lha-pa* control their circles of helping figures—remedial spirits in zoomorphic and anthropomorphic form—involved in therapeutic activities. The most common animal spirits of the *lha-pa* are bears, wolves and carnivorous birds, with foxes, dogs and other animals also known. Clear functional parallels exist in the shamanism of the Altai and Siberia. For example, the Yakut shamans had a main assistant (could be ancestor or deity of the sky) in the form of an elk, bear, stallion, wolf or ox, who would mediate between people and other groups of spirits (Alekseev 1984: 269). They also had helping spirits in the guise of humans and animals (*ibid.*: 269). The Tölös, a Southern Altaian ethnic group, had patronizing and helping spirits in the shape of bears, wolves and snakes (*ibid.*: 270). The Evenk shamans had deputy spirits in the shape of elk, reindeer, bears and eagles (Anisimov 1963: 96, 97). Todji shamans also had animals, ravens, eagles and hawks among their helping spirits (Alekseev 1984: 275). Likewise, Dolgans shamans have fox and wolf helpmates (Nebesky-Wojkowitz: 541). A Nivkhi shamaness of Sakhalin is documented appealing to a grandfather tiger to have pity and help her not fall ill (Taksami 1996: 104). The tiger as a remedial spirit is also used by spirit-mediums in Upper Tibet.

Spirit-mediums known as *dpa' bo* and *lha-pa* are active in regions across the Tibetan plateau and Himalayan rim-land. They are more or less related to their counterparts in Upper Tibet, in terms of

practice and historical origins. One group exhibiting archaic traditions are the male *dpa' bo* and female *bsnyen jo-mo* of Sikkim, Bhutan and the southern Tibetan borderlands. Like the *lha-pa* of Upper Tibet, this is often a hereditary vocation in which the mediums act as vehicles for their personal protective spirits, and at one time danced holding a small drum (*rnga-chung*) and flat-bell (*gshang*) (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 425–428).[22] The important oracle of the sKur-stod district of Bhutan, called the *gter-bdag dpa' bo*, wears the *btsan-chas* (dress of the *btsan*), plays the *ḍa-ma-ru* hand-drum and sucks illness-causing poisons from his patients (Yablonsky 1997: 1095, 1096), all practices found among the spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet.

In A-mdo, *lha-pa* practice more freely than in Upper Tibet and participate in high-profile fortune-bestowing communal festivals. *Lha-pa* play an officiating role at the summer solstice connected *glu-rol* festival (performed to insure the well-being of the community, crops and livestock) of Rab-skong (Nagano 2000). These functions of the A-mdo spirit-mediums are of course matched by their opposite number in Upper Tibet. The senior *lha-pa* of Rab-skong is possessed by a martial spirit named dGra 'dul dbang-phyug and the younger *lha-pa* by a spirit called Blon-po, both of which are in the circle of the mountain god A-myes rma-chen spom-ra (*ibid.*: 576). The senior *lha-pa* performs a divination with a black yak horn to predict the success of the festival and the outcome of the next harvest, as well as determining the luck of individual households in the coming year (*ibid.*: 577, 578, 580, 586, 587). The *glu-rol* also includes the *klu-bsangs* (offerings to water spirits) rite held in a brook, which is performed by the *lha-pa* (*ibid.*: 577). Offerings to the *klu* also play an important part in the rituals of the *lha-pa* of Upper Tibet.

Lha-pa and *lha-mo* (female mediums) with functions similar to those found in Upper Tibet are known in conterminous Ladakh (La-dwags), where they are believed to cure illnesses, conduct divination, and exorcise evil spirits (Day 1990: 206, 208).[23] In keeping with Bon and

[22] The *mun* and other Lepcha spirit-mediums of Sikkim also usually represent hereditary professions (Gorer 1987: 215). For a study of the ritual activities (propitiation of personal deities, harvest offerings, etc.) of the *dpa' bo* in the Sikkim village of Tingchim see Balikci Denjongpa 2002.

[23] In an early 20th century account of divination, the *Wazir* of Ladakh ordered two *lha-pa* to go into trance near a *lha-tho* (stone altar) of a sacred grove and identify a thief and his whereabouts (Ribbach 1979: 191, 192).

Buddhist tradition, spirit-mediums of both regions work for the benefit of sentient beings, healing both humans and animals. The *lha-pa* of Ladakh tend to follow an inherited profession (*ibid.*: 208), as they do in adjacent Upper Tibet. As a prelude to becoming a *lha-mo* in Ladakh, women can suffer from mental disturbances (Schenk 1993: 333), as they do in Upper Tibet. The principal possessing deity of the *lha-pa* of Ladakh is commonly a village *yul-lha, khyim-lha* (household deity) or *lha 'dre* (in this context: minor deity or ghost), and is invoked by reciting a *gser-skyems* (libation offerings) with the *ḍa-ma-ru* in the right hand and a *dril-bu* (Buddhist bell) in the left.[24] A similar manner of invoking deities is found among the *lha-pa* of Upper Tibet; however, they use the Bon *gshang* instead of the Buddhist bell. Also, the divinities of Upper Tibet tend to be much more powerful examples of the indigenous Tibetan pantheon than the Ladakhi deities. The *lha-pa* of Ladakh generally have an inferior or ambivalent status in society, and do not come from the aristocratic clans (Day 1990: 207, 208, 216). On the other hand, while their status falls far below that of incarnate lamas, the *lha-pa* of Upper Tibet have not been as dominated by the lamaist ecclesiastical hierarchy as their counterparts in Ladakh, at least in part due to their isolation from major monastic centers. This helps to explain why the *lha-pa* of Upper Tibet can belong to the most prominent clans of the region.

The *lha-pa* of Ladakh use the mirror as a temporary residence of the deities, and a *mda' dar* (festooned ritual arrow) to call spirits, as a support of deities and as a symbol of prosperity (Day 1990: 211, 214, 215); mirror and arrow practices of the *lha-pa* of Upper Tibet as well. Likewise, the Ladakhi *lha-pa*, whose deity-possession is marked by the donning of the *rigs-lnga* headdress, perform drum divination, speak in Tibetan and suck *grib* (impurities) causing illness from their patients with their drum (Yamada 1995), just as is done by their peers in Upper Tibet. Ladakhi *lha-pa* remove *grib* in the form of black and other-colored mucus (Srinivas 1998: 144), a common practice in Upper Tibet as well. A wolf deity of a *lha-mo* in Ladakh (Day 1990: 211) is also reminiscent of the Siberian and Upper Tibet traditions. The Ladakhi *lha-pa* diagnose misfortune caused by a conflict between a newlywed couple's protective deities (Srinivas 2001: 133–134).

[24] See Day 1990, pp. 209, 211, 212, 216; Yamada 1995, pp. 88, 89, 93.

This too is one of the functions of spirit-mediums in Upper Tibet.

The *lha-pa* of the *btsan* deity gZhon-nu mdung-lag, the *yul-lha* of western Zangs-dkar, belongs to the same general tradition as his counterparts in Ladakh and Upper Tibet. Like the spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet, he is a layman coming from one of various clans, and is perceived to have curative, diagnostic and mantic functions (Riaboff 1996: 29, 37). The Zangs-dkar *lha-pa* wears the *rigs-lnga* headdress and plays the *ḍa-ma-ru*, and still has important community functions (*ibid.*: 36, 37). In the Upper Tibet of the Communist period, the participation of *lha-pa* in community festivals has been abolished. The most famous *sku-rten* (oracle-healers) in Ladakh are two monks from the Sa-skya-pa monastery of Mang-spro, who incorporate a local deity, Rong-btsan dkar-dmar.[25] As with *btsan* deities in Upper Tibet, Rong-btsan is subordinate to Buddhist protectors such as mGon-po, illustrating how the tradition of spirit-mediumship has been accommodated to Buddhism. Likewise, Rong-btsan addresses concerns about physical and mental health, community happiness, and the forecasts for crops and other matters.

Lha-pa are also found in sPi-ti (Spiti), where their practice is influenced by traditions originating in both Upper Tibet and cis-Himalayan regions of Himachal Pradesh.[26] Among the functions of the *lha-pa* of Spiti are the curing of diseases, the exorcising of demons and fortune-bestowal. The *lha-pa* of Spiti are active at three communal celebrations: Namkin (a harvest festival), Lo-gsar (Tibetan Lunar New Year), and the *bsod-nams lo-gsar* (winter solstice). In a winter fortune-bestowing ritual, the *lha-pa* bSod-nams tshe-ring of Brag-mkhar became possessed by the local *yul-lha* Jo-dar. During the trance, which took place in his kitchen, he wore a special turban (*lha-thod*) for the performance and held a vase and a bundle of peacock feathers. While possessed by Jo-dar, bSod-nams tshe-ring stood up in bare feet and congenially conversed about the value of Buddhism. The end of the possession was marked by a squeal as the *lha-pa* fell to a sitting position.

In Spiti, there is a winter solstice festival called *lha-gsol* (deity propitiation) held in honor of the various *yul-lha* to insure the well-being

[25] For information on the mediumship of Rong-btsan see Tewari 1987.

[26] This information on the *lha-pa* of Spiti was collected by the present author on a field trip to the region, in 1992.

of the community in the coming year. In the village of Ta-po, the local *yul-lha* sMan-skyong has no voice and can only be reached by the *lha-pa* when a monastic protectress named rDo-rje chen-mo, one of three sisters residing in the vicinity, possesses him. In the *lha-gsol* of 1992, the *lha-pa* was clad in a *lha-thod* turban. In his right hand, he held an instrument called a *pho-brang*, a staff with many hanging colored ribbons surmounted by a trident, which serves to call down the deity. Under the possession of rDo-rje chen-mo the *lha-pa* spoke in a garrulous fashion about the need of the villagers to carefully protect their culture and traditions. Before the trance ended, the *lha-pa* tossed a handful of barleycorns at the bottles of *chang* (beer) and *ghanti* (spirits) brought by each household of Ta-po. The bottle into which a kernel of barley landed was the one selected by rDo-rje chen-mo to be offered to the *yul-lha*. Afterwards, this bottle of alcohol and *rlung-rta* (prayer flags) attached to juniper boughs, from each household, were carried by male members to the shrine of sMan-skyong.

The *lha-pa* of the Sherpas (Shar-pa) usually pursue a hereditary profession, and are chosen involuntarily by the deities (Fürer-Haimendorf 1979: 255). The Sherpa *lha-pa* use the *rigs-lnga* headdress, which sometimes has feathers.[27] The spirit-mediums of the Sherpas are attributed with the ability to diagnose the cause of illness and misfortune, the power of healing, deities that inhabit mirrors, and the ability to speak in the language of the gods,[28] common characteristics of the *lha-pa* of Upper Tibet as well.

In Tibet, the most famous class of spirit-mediums were the *sku-rten-pa* (body supporter),[29] which were possessed by powerful protectors such as the god Pe-har and Tshangs-pa (Brahma), as well as by malevolent ghosts of the *gshin 'dre* and *rgyal-po* classes of demons. The *sku-rten* profession was open to both men and women of all social classes (Havnevik 2002: 262, 277, 278), as are mediumistic activities in Upper Tibet. In formulating policy, the old Tibetan

[27] See Fürer-Haimendorf 1979, p. 256; Adams 1996, pp. 186–194.

[28] See Fürer-Haimendorf 1979, p. 261; Adams 1996, pp. 186–194.

[29] The *Pe-har* oracle is also commonly called *chos-rje* (lord of religion), *chos-skyong* (protector of religion) and *chos-rgyal* (king of religion). For descriptions of the *sku-rten-pa* and their trances see Waddell 1993, pp. 478–482; Rock 1935; Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, pp. 409–454; Prince Peter 1978; Tibetan Bulletin 1992; Havnevik 2002; Byang-ngos-pa tshe-g.yang 2002.

government used the pronouncements of the *sku-rten-pa*, thus their social status was much higher than the *lha-pa* of Upper Tibet. However, those that relied on dangerous spirits of a more recent pedigree, instead of autochthonous protective deities like the mountain gods, indicate that these *sku-rten-pa* belonged to an alternative (historically derivative?) tradition of spirit-mediumship. Like the *lha-pa*, the *sku-rten-pa* were often laymen, and the costumes, paraphernalia, mirrors, and vulture feather plumes used by both groups bear much resemblance. Similarly, the *sku-rten-pa* could display supernatural strength as when twisting a thick steel sword blade.[30] The most famous and powerful *sku-rten-pa* is the gNas-chung oracle for rDo-rje grags-ldan, the leader of the sKu-lnga group of protective deities, whose principal emissary is Pe-har, the chief of the dGe-lugs-pa sect protective deities. The current oracular tradition was initiated in 1542 (Tibetan Bulletin 1992: 23). The present oracle, the Venerable Thub-bstan dngos-grub (born 1958), reports that before his first possession in 1987, he experienced strange headaches, emotional agitation, and bled from the mouth and nose (*ibid.*: 26). These kinds of physical and mental disturbances also affect the *lha-pa* of Upper Tibet. In trance, the Pe-har oracle speaks in a poetical language (*ibid.*: 28), a phenomenon known among the spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet as well.

Many of the practices and traditions of the Pe-har *sku-rten-pa* have never been written down and remain highly secret.[31] The deity Pe-har is the *'phrin-las* (activity) and main manifestation of a group of deities known as sKu-lnga. Although Pe-har has passed beyond the sphere of worldly existence, as *gtso-bo* (chief) of the *lha-srin sde-brgyad* (eight orders of elemental spirits), he has a close affinity with the mountain gods and other indigenous deities. The costume worn by the Pe-har *sku-rten-pa* is called *lha'i chas* (divine costume), and he says that it is of the type used by Gling ge-sar of the Tibetan epic and the warrior deities known as *dgra-lha*. It consists of a helmet and cuirass, which are worn by mountain gods and by Tibetan warriors

[30] See Rock 1935, p. 478; Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, p. 420; Ekvall 1964, pp. 273, 274.

[31] The information on Pe-har and his *sku-rten-pa* in this and the following two paragraphs came from the present oracle Thub-bstan dngos-grub, the 14th member of the lineage, in personal communication. He kindly acceded to be interviewed in March and April of 2003.

as well. The Pe-har *sku-rten-pa* reports that the headdress he uses is the *dbu-rmog* (helmet), and is surmounted by the *lcog-dar*, five sets of pennants and white *bya-rgod* (vulture) plumes.[32] He explains that these feathers symbolize that the *chos-skyong* Pe-har is the highest of protectors, as the vulture is the highest-flying and most powerful of birds. The vulture feather plumes used by the *lha-pa* likewise have an exalted symbolic position. On this subject Thub-bstan dngos-grub, the Pe-har *sku-rten-pa*, writes:[33]

> The vulture feather decorating the top of the *lcog-dar* is a sign that the vulture has the ability to fly enduringly to the bounds of the divine path (sky), and it has the power to conquer the entire realm of evil, the perpetrators of the flight of wicked thought and activities. The amassed plume on top of the *lcog-dar* is a sign of the holder having comprehended the [Buddhist] view.

Pe-har *sku-rten-pa* observes that on the front of the *dbu-rmog* helmet are five *thod-skam* (skull diadems) which, like the diadems on the *rigs-lnga* crown of the mediums of Upper Tibet, represent the rGyal-ba rigs-lnga (the Buddha orders of the five directions of the cosmos). The Pe-har *sku-rten-pa* wears a mirror on his chest called a *dam-gsal me-long*, as do certain *lha-pa*. He alleges that these mirrors have the capability to reflect all phenomena, in their true nature, as being empty of inherent existence. The *sku-rten-pa* notes that *Hri* is embossed on his *me-long*, the *sa-bon* (seed syllable) of the Buddha 'Od-dpag-med, the *yi-dam* rTa-mgrin and the *srung-ma* gNas-chung chos-skyong (rDo-rje grags-ldan and his circle of five plenipotentiary forms, the sKu-lnga). These three categories of deities have the same enlightened nature. It will be recalled that among the lower status *lha-pa*, the Buddha, *yi-dam* gods and high protectors form three hierarchical

[32] The *dbu-rmog* is regularly used by the mountain deities and is mentioned in Imperial period inscriptions as a symbol of kingly power. In the incense offering text entitled *Khyad gter gyi dgra lha dbang bstod gzhan phan rol ba* (found in *bSang mchod phyogs bsgrigs*, edited by bSod-nams 'bum, pp. 99 to 104), concerning the *rten* (tabernacle or support) of the *dgra-lha*, it is written (p. 101): "A [feather] of the king of the birds, the vulture, embellishes the peak [of the helmet]. This wonderful iron helmet is erected as the *rten* of the mighty *dgra-lha*." (*rtse la bya rgyal rgod pos mtshon / ya mtshan can gyi lcags zhwa 'di / dgra lha gnyan po'i rten du btsugs /*).

[33] This passage was specially written for this work. It reads: *lcog dar gyi rtser bya rgod kyi spus brgyan pa ni bya rgod kyis lha lam mthar thug pa'i nam 'phangs gcod pa'i nus shugs dang ldan pa 'di nyid kyis / ngan g.yo'i 'phur lding g.yo byed nag phyogs kyi sde thams cad bcoms nus pa'i brda's mtshon pa dang / lta ba ldeng dang ldan pa'i rtags su lcog dar kyi rtser rgod kyi thul lu spungs pa'o /.*

layers overarching the actual deities of the trance. The *rnga-chen* (big drum) used by the *sku-rten-pa* functions in the same way as those of the spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet. Thub-bstan dngos-grub states that it is used to call the deities because it produces a sound reminiscent of a dragon's roar, which is pleasing to them. While the *mda' dar* and various animals do not figure in the trance of the *sku-rten-pa*, he points out that effigies of animals and arrows are used to propitiate the sKu-lnga in rituals such as *mdos* (enticements), *rten 'bul* (support offerings), and *g.yang-sgrub* (good fortune empowerment).

Although the Pe-har *sku-rten-pa* is the state oracle, in certain instances he makes prophecies for members of the general public, such as when he recommends a specific hospital for a critically injured person. He also has a healing function that is carried out by spitting black tea on people. He affirms that this action has the power to remove diseases. While in trance, black tea is also spat on barleycorns to produce a highly coveted charm called *phyag-nas*. *Phyag-nas* is popularly believed to be able to heal diseases, eliminate nightmares, and bring good luck to travelers and business people. At the beginning of the trance, the Pe-har *sku-rten-pa* dances with a bow in his left hand (an arrow is at his side) and a saber in his right hand. When the dance finishes he throws the bow and sword down, signaling that all obstructions have been expelled (*bgegs-sgrol*). These curative, general-welfare, and exorcistic functions bring the *sku-rten* in close correspondence with the *lha-pa*. Instead of the rainbow-like *'od-zer* (radiant consciousness) of the *lha-pa*, the Pe-har *sku-rten-pa* states that he is possessed by a consciousness principle called *ye-shes sems-dpa'* (wisdom thought). He remarks that it is invisible and wind-like. Just before possession, both the *lha-pa* and Pe-har *sku-rten-pa* experience unusual perceptions and bodily sensations.

The last female state oracle of Tibet, Blo-bzang tshe-sgron was a medium for the *bstan-ma* goddesses and rDo-rje g.yu-sgron-ma,[34] who would advise on health matters and daily problems. These types of deities are doctrinally related to the lake goddesses of Upper Tibet, and their activities also find expression among the lake divinities. Other parallels between the female state oracle and the *lha-pa* of Upper Tibet include: hereditary lineages, purification of the body as

[34] This information on Blo-bzang tshe-sgron comes from Havnevik 2002; Byang-ngos-pa tshe-g.yang 2002.

a prerequisite of mediumistic activity, avoidance of tobacco, and the entry of the possessing deities through the fingers. Another important female medium from Lhasa, A-ne lo-chen of Shug-gseb monastery, was possessed by a *btsan-rgod* (*btsan* class spirit) and various local deities (Schenk 2002: 275, 276), the backbone of spirit-mediumship in Upper Tibet.

The Gurung and Tamang spirit-mediums of Nepal also have certain practices and beliefs that appear to be historically interconnected with those of the *lha-pa* of Upper Tibet. For one thing, the most common ritual implement of these groups is the drum, which is used in the respective trance ceremonies for calling the deities. In addition to Tibetan Buddhism, the Gurungs of central-west Nepal practice a Siberian type of shamanism, the central cosmological element being a world tree that interconnects the three spheres of the universe (Mumford 1990: 6–8). In Upper Tibetan mythology, the sacred mountains fulfil the same function, bridging the three realms of existence (*srid-pa-gsum*). The Gurungs have two types of shamans, including the *paju* (*pha-jo*) whose tutelary deities are in the form of a male or animal (*ibid.*: 119). In an elaborate ceremony, the *paju* enters into trance and searches for the lost souls (*bla*) of patients by ascending a mountain, tree and ladder to the upper world (*dmu'i go 'phang* ?), and by descending into the underworld (*khro dmyal-sa* ?) (*ibid.*: 169–172). In Upper Tibet, it is the possessing deities and their helpers that search for errant *bla* (souls).

Like the *lha-pa* of Upper Tibet, the Tamang *bombo* of Nepal perform healing rituals in which evil spirits are banished, lost souls (*bla*) recalled, the future told, and good fortune bestowed.[35] Moreover, the *bombo* honor a personal *btsan*, and it is the *btsan* that is responsible for revelations, as well as being a main possessing deity.[36] The central role played by the *btsan* deities has clear parallels with the Upper Tibet tradition of spirit-mediumship. The *bombo* also invoke a mountain deity queen Jo-mo g.yang-ri rgyal-mu (Schmid 1967: 85, 86). Another correspondence between the *lha-pa* of Upper Tibet and the Tamang *bombo* is the use of the *khyung* (mythic horned eagle) in certain healing rituals. When exorcising the *si* (Tibetan: *sri*) demons,

[35] For the functions of the *bombo* see Peters 1998, p. 55; Holmberg 1989, pp. 3, 142, 159, 160; Schmid 1967, p. 86.
[36] See Holmberg 1989, pp. 151–153, 159, 160, 162, 163.

the *bombo* calls a *khyung* into his body and dances fiercely about with a dog skull in his mouth (Holmberg 1989: 162). In Upper Tibet, a fox skull is sometimes used in rituals to exorcise the *sri* demons. The cis-Himalayan shamans of various ethnic groups in Nepal often wear a long white gown, white turban and a headdress with peacock or pheasant feathers.[37] As we shall see, vestigial turbans (*thod*) and vulture feathers are also used by the *lha-pa* of Upper Tibet, recalling the costume of the ancient Bon priests called *gshen.*

In the northwestern Nepal district of 'Om-lo (Humla) exist spirit-mediums called *dha-mi* and those who officiate at their trance ceremonies, the *bhrang-ris.*[38] The latter is the *lha-gsol-mkhan,* the one who burns incense and invokes the deities, often in the local dialect. Like the *lha-pa* of Upper Tibet, the *bhrang-ris* use the *gshang* bell. Both types of functionaries of 'Om-lo wear white woolen garments and white cotton turbans. The function of the *dha-mi* trance is to insure the welfare of individuals, the community and livestock. They also make pronouncements about the future through divination. Purification by bathing is an important preparatory practice for the *dha-mi,* and they often make pilgrimage to mTsho ma-pham, in western Tibet. As with many of the *lha-pa* of Upper Tibet, the *dha-mi* wear their hair unshorn and piled on top of the head. Among their possessing deities are *yul-lha* and Buddhist protectors. The *dha-mi* Padma from the village of sTod, is a spirit-medium for three aspects of Gangs-dkar (Gangs-rin-po-che), a god who only accepts *dkar-mchod* (offerings not involving the taking of life): dKar-po dung-ldan (White Conch One), Ser-po gser-ldan (Yellow Gold One) and sNgon-po g.yu-ldan (Blue Turquoise One). While pacific mountain god manifestations are also common among the spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet, the particular possessing form of Gangs-rin-po-che, Gangs-ri lha-btsan, is a wrathful red-colored deity. In the vicinity of Bar-khang, in 'Om-lo, there are around twenty families, including *bhrang-ris,* who believe that they immigrated in the distant past from Khyung-lung, in Upper Tibet.

[37] Color photographs of a Rai shamaness attired in this manner are found in Müller *et al.* 2002, pp. 45, 46, 173.

[38] This information on the *dha-mi* of 'Om-lo came from Nag-ru dge-legs sbyin-pa, a librarian at Khri-brten nor-bu-rtse monastery, Kathmandu. In 2002, he was part of an Oxford University film team studying the *dha-mi.*

iii) *Introduction to Part Two: interviews conducted with spirit-mediums*

This part of the book contains interviews conducted with various spirit-mediums between 1997 and 2002.[39] Here we will become acquainted with the mountain gods (*lha-ri* and *btsan*) on which the spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet depend for their curative powers and prognostic capabilities. The proceedings of the trance ceremonies are thoroughly described, and their technical and material aspects carefully catalogued. The personal histories and professional initiations of the various mediums are also elaborated.

All but two of the fifteen spirit-mediums interviewed for this work live in the wide expanses of northern Tibet, making access to them difficult. In recent times, their traditional activities have been heavily circumscribed and some have curtailed their spirit-mediumship altogether. Due to the censure they have faced, the *lha-pa* were occasionally hesitant to speak about their profession. I had to exercise care and diplomacy so as not to invoke painful memories, and to insure that my questions remained within the anthropological guidelines set forth by the government of the Tibet Autonomous Region. These guidelines were developed in conjunction with the Tibetan Academy of Social Sciences.

Despite the difficulties they have had to endure, the *lha-pa* generally proved cooperative and helpful. However, as many have not practiced since 1959, or only to a modest degree, details of their profession have slowly ebbed with time. As memories fade and scope for practice diminishes, the holders of the tradition of spirit-mediumship relinquish ever more of their knowledge and ability, endangering the continuation of their lineages. Moreover, as changing social conditions increase their marginalization in Upper Tibet, chances to study the *lha-pa* whilst in trance were only infrequently forthcoming, and these tended to be short, subdued performances. The absence, in this day and age, of elaborate public performances precluded the recording of significant pre-Communist traditions of the spirit-mediums. My interviews and observations therefore, were a kind of ethnographic salvage operation intended to document the remnants of a rich tradition.

[39] For previous findings regarding two other spirit-mediums in Upper Tibet see Bellezza 1997, pp. 62–65, 318–320.

In Nepal and India, where several interviews with *lha-pa* were held, there are few political inhibitions to the practice of spirit-mediumship. As is well known, both of these countries have their own diverse traditions of spirit-mediumship, spanning many geographic areas and ethnic groups. Nevertheless, there are factors affecting the integrity of the Tibetan tradition in exile. These revolve around a general sense of apathy, or even hostility in the Tibetan community regarding the philosophy and practices of the *lha-pa*, and the trend away from localized traditions towards more homogenous expressions of culture and religion. Although a sociological analysis of the role of the spirit-mediums in exile communities is beyond the scope of this study, it must be pointed out that modernization and orthodox Buddhism have not favored the *lha-pa* who embody the so-called *'jig-rten pa'i lha* (worldly gods and spirits). Both inside and outside Tibet, as ever more obstacles are put in the way of the spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet, the very survival of their profession is called into question. This state of affairs has had a huge impact on the purview and direction of this study. The disappearance of spirit-mediumship however, does not seem to have had an adverse impact on the integrity and quality of the data that I have compiled. What *lha-pa* do remain appear to have internalized the tradition with a remarkable degree of competency. This is reflected in the way that the foundations and practices of spirit-mediumship are strikingly uniform throughout Upper Tibet.

The *lha-pa* interviewed are all well-known figures in their respective communities. In the sparsely populated Byang-thang the reputations of the few remaining spirit-mediums have carried as far as two hundred kilometers from their place of residence. As there are very few practicing *lha-pa* left, those who have tried other remedies without success occasionally seek them over long distances. However, as the activities of spirit-mediumship are severely restricted, and the client-base very small, their practice is usually limited to several townships at most. The persistence of the *lha-pa*, despite the very difficult conditions they have had to endure in the last several decades, seems to be explained by the great faith some Tibetans have in their therapeutic capabilities and prowess.

My research establishes that similarities in belief and ceremonial practice aside, the spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet are normally distinguished by their peerless behavior. This also appears to be the predominant perception of those who live in their communities. I have found that in daily life, they comport themselves with dignity and aplomb, akin to the conduct of good monks and lamas. They are however, laymen with families, livestock and business interests. I was also favorably struck by their hospitality, patience and understanding. Typically, the *lha-pa* are people who enjoy a full life span. It is not unusual for them to reach their seventies and eighties in relatively good health.

I have conducted what amounts to preliminary interviews with the *lha-pa*. Over the last eight years, in the course of my extensive archaeological and ethnographic exploration of Upper Tibet, I sought out the *lha-pa* to learn more about their traditions and practices. My aim was to interview every elderly and/or locally renowned spirit-medium in Upper Tibet, west of Nag-chu city. By my reckoning, there are around twenty such surviving individuals, fifteen of whom are presented in this work (the study of the other mediums will appear in future works). I conducted all interviews on my own accord (sometimes under the supervision of Tibetan officials and colleagues), simultaneously translating the information I received into notebooks. Later, I would compose my notes into journals and ask follow-up questions. By 1999, I had compiled around 200 potential questions to ask the mediums and to serve as a basis for improvisation during the interviews. Specific responses varied widely and it was not unusual for some or even many of my questions to have remained unanswered for the interviewees' lack of acquaintance with the subject matter.

Further association with the spirit-mediums would surely bring many new facts to light. There is still much to learn about their traditional social roles in the community, initiation procedures, pantheon of deities, ritual activities, and ceremonial performances. It can only be hoped that the cultural and sociopolitical conditions favoring such research continue to blossom.

iv) *Introduction to Part Three: the mountain deities of the spirit-mediums*

In this part of the book, through Tibetan textual sources, I closely examine the character and functions of the divine mountains on which the spirit-mediums rely. This permits one to gain a fuller appreciation of how these mountain deities generally inform religious life in Upper Tibet, providing a historical and cultural context for

the *lha-pa* vocation. As shown, due to entwined processes of cultural development, the customs and practices of the spirit-mediums, and those contained in the literary record for sacred mountains and lakes share many fundamental themes in common. These functional crossovers between the *lha-pa* and the texts make it appropriate to speak of a single tradition of native divinities with oral and literary components. In some instances, it would appear that ancient oral traditions served as the inspiration and basis for the subsequent development of the literary tradition. The cult of indigenous deities is predicated on the premise that a line of communication is open between humans and sacred topographs. In essence, the tradition holds that the mountains and lakes are sentient and affect one's life and fortune just as other members of society do.

As we have seen, there are six principal mountain deities used by the *lha-pa* of Upper Tibet: gNyan-chen thang-lha, rTa-rgo, Gangs-ri lha-btsan, Nam-ra, Rol-pa skya-bdun, and Dam-can mgar-ba nag-po. These six mountain deities are among the most powerful and widely distributed *yul-lha* in Upper Tibet, with their influence, in one form or another, being felt over the entire 700,000-square kilometer region. Their role in the religious and cultural life of the inhabitants of the region is vibrant and compelling, and takes five principal forms:

1) Embodiments of Buddhist and Bon tenets.
2) Territorial defender gods.
3) Clan, family and personal protective deities.
4) Objects of pilgrimage and geographic lore.
5) The focus of spirit-mediumship.

First and foremost, these mountain deities are potent guardians that protect the interests of individuals, communities, livestock, the environment, and religion. Their place in local culture is therefore, ubiquitous and the course of their activities immediate and very tangible. As noted in the general introduction, nowhere more than in the work of the *lha-pa* are the indigenous deities alive and present. This intimacy is reflected in the texts we will examine, where the gods are directly called upon—in the present tense—to provide protection, mental well being and social prestige for the officiants of the various rituals and their clients. Tibetan literary sources also encapsulate the *lha-pa's* view of the etiology of disease and misfortune, and

the manner in which they are to be prevented and treated. The ritual paraphernalia, ceremonial structures and invocations used by the *lha-pa* are also represented in the texts selected for translation. These commonalties delineate what is generally referred to as the 'Tibetan mountain cult,' an integral part of Tibetan religion both past and present.

The oral and literary aspects of tradition agree that the mountain deities have a wrathful side to their personalities. Although they also act as pacific deities, their fierce nature is often paramount. Tibetans perceive this ferocity as being expressed in terms of the destructive side of natural forces as in violent storms, earthquakes, droughts, epidemics, etc. As local participants in natural processes, the mountain deities are closely allied with both the good and bad that result from them. A second reason often cited by Tibetans for the wrathful predisposition of the mountain gods is that it is essential for the domination of disease-causing, harm-engendering elemental spirits, who attack human beings with great persistence and regularity. The mountain gods also rule over the plants and animals in their locale, which serve as instruments for their largesse or devastation. The spirit-mediums have a penetrating understanding of the function of the indigenous pantheon in Tibetan society and use it to serve their patients and clients. By doing so they become peacemakers, mediating between the danger and capriciousness of the preternatural environment (the world of spirits) and the needs and aspirations of human beings. Other religious functionaries (such as monks and *sngags-pa*) also fulfill this mediation role, as delineated in the text-based rituals we will examine.

A word on the texts I have chosen for translation is in order. The range of texts for the worship and ritual dispensation of the mountain deities that participate in trance ceremonies of Upper Tibet is wide. They include the following literary genres: *bsangs/bsangs-gsol* (incense and purification offerings), *gser-skyems* (libation offerings), *gsol 'debs* (prayers and petitions to deities), *dkar-chag* (registers of sacred places and associated historical events), *g.yang 'gugs* (fortune-attraction rituals), *mdos* (enticements and coercion mechanisms), *bskul-pa* and *gsol-kha* (invocations and associated requests), and *bskang-ba/bskang-gso* (offerings for appeasement and expiation). Wherever possible, I have preferred to use Bon texts because they are partially derived from indigenous or non-Buddhist religious tradition, which may have existed in precursory forms prior to Buddhism. Moreover, it is the

Bon tradition that claims as its own the origin of the *lha-pa*. Spirit-mediums are thought to have been active in Zhang-zhung times, long predating Gu-ru rin-po-che, the founder of spirit-mediumship in the Buddhist tradition (see Part Four, section i). In particular, the texts that have been selected adequately describe the appearance, attributes and activities of the mountain gods, and the ritual performances associated with them, which find resonance with the beliefs and practices of the *lha-pa*.

The texts surveyed in this work broadly reflect the stylistic development of the liturgies for the indigenous pantheon (deities wedded to the Tibetan landscape). Three interrelated phases of stylistic progression that span the transition from non-lamaist (non-ecclesiastic) to lamaist (ecclesiastic) religious forms are discernable in the literary tradition, and are noted in various introductions to the texts presented in this part of the book. The initiation of these phases of literary development may correspond with the historical progression from pre-Buddhist to Buddhist culture but this cannot be determined with the evidence at hand. It is also important to note that in more recent centuries, there are instances of ritual texts composed in all three stylistic phases of the liturgical tradition and therefore, this system of classification cannot be used to gauge the chronology of individual works.

In their non-lamaist configuration (what may be the earliest style), the liturgies do not admit of Buddhist tradition. They are characterized by highly colored dynamic verses drawn from indigenous culture, which are infused by a distinctive system of meter and assonance (see Part Three, section i, pp. 183, 184). This elementary phase of prosody in ritual literature seems to owe its inspiration to the tradition of bards (*sgrung-pa/sgrung-mkhan/bka' sgrung*), who orally transmitted the invocations for the mountain divinities and other native lore from generation to generation. The intermediate stylistic phase of ritual literature is characterized by Bon and Buddhist doctrinal infiltration into the indigenous poetry, as a means of nominally claiming it as a legitimate channel of religious expression. While many of the indigenous poetical conventions remain intact, they are often bracketed by passages that elevate the deities to the status of high Bon and Buddhist protectors, partially dislodging them from their geographic context. The third stylistic phase of ritual literature is the thorough transformation of the verses into a Bon or Buddhist religious statement, with a consequent atrophying of indigenous tradition. This lamaist interpenetration of content primarily relates to

canonical doctrines, iconography, mental imagery and mantras. In what may be the most recent stylistic phase, the liturgies retain very little of the lore, vocabulary and prosody of the indigenous literature. The deities are further pried away from their geographic moorings and made to reside in Buddhist ontological categories.[40]

The textual and oral components of tradition regarding sacred mountains have much in common, for they are both derived from Buddhist praxis as well as Tibet's native cultural milieu. Bon legendary sources in general unambiguously attribute the wellspring of native tradition to pre-Imperial times, when the customs and liturgies for the indigenous pantheon are thought to have developed under the auspices of the Bon religion, particularly in the kingdom of Zhang-zhung.[41] Despite the uncritical nature of Bon chronological attributions, the antiquity of certain descriptive motifs, lexical

[40] The geographical detachment of indigenous deities from the lamacized rites of the *lha-bon* ritualists of southern Glo (Mustang) is studied in Ramble 1998. The *lha-bon* recitations are particularly pertinent to understanding the transition between the elementary stylistic phase and the Buddhist-inspired phases of oral literature, as they may reveal the first glimmerings of lamaist tradition. The process of Buddhacization in peripheral Tibetan cultural regions is ongoing, mirroring historical changes that appear to have occurred in Upper Tibet over a wider period of time.

[41] There certainly is no scholarly consensus on whether pre-Imperial tradition can be equated with an early form of the institutionalized Bon religion. In the absence of the requisite scientific and philological data, the debate over the antiquity of the Bon religion and the degree of historical continuity it exhibits will continue to rage. The complexity of the subject and the methodological problems it raises are not easily grappled with. In any analysis of historical continuity as pertains to ritual tradition it is essential to define the cultural arena in which such a phenomenon potentially expresses itself. Briefly stated, there are three major areas that must be considered here: 1) The continuity of specific ritual activities and liturgies; 2) continuity of the symbolic and semantic systems that invest ritual with meaning; and 3) continuity in the social, economic and physical environments in which the rituals operate. Furthermore, there are two main ways in which continuities in ritual traditions potentially express themselves in extant oral and literary records: As relics (traditions transmitted in an unmodified form) and as reformulations (traditions adapted to later cultural and social influences). There is a considerable body of scholarly opinion that places the genesis of the systematized Bon religion at the end of the Tenth century. Countervailing voices see demonstrable cultural lines of continuity in Bon extending back to the Imperial period Tun-huang manuscripts. It has been shown that certain Bon ritual texts are closely related to the Tun-huang literary tradition, indicating that the post-11th century Bon religion preserved the content and style of literary composition prevalent in the Imperial period (Karmay and Nagano 2002: viii). For examples of these literary parallels see Karmay 1998; Stein 2003. Stein notes (2003: 597, 598, 608) that Bon-po authors must have had identical or comparable texts to the Tun-huang manuscripts, creating an unbroken literary or oral tradition. A third school of thought, as propounded by the idealistic nativists, perceives the Bon religion as originating in an essentially complete and ossified form deep in prehistory. This latter view is the one frequently upheld by Bon clerics.

features and syntactical components of the rites of propitiation for the native divinities is implied by their antediluvian character. Nevertheless, the tools for evincing any objective antiquity remain beyond our grasp, as the historical, ethnological and archaeological data needed for quantification are not yet at our disposal. At this juncture in Tibetological studies, we lack the scientific means to address fundamental questions regarding the origins, chronology and advancement of indigenous tradition. What we can confidently state is that many of the rituals featured in this work do contain strands of non-Buddhist lore, which in the Bon tradition have their origin in the fabled pre-Imperial epoch.

In consonance with this Bon affirmation of antiquity and the Upper Tibet endemical quality of the literary materials contained herein, I advance the hypothesis that there are indeed vestigial cultural elements within them that originate from a heterogeneous corpus of pre-Imperial tradition. This hypothetical early cultural endowment is primarily oriented towards the Tibetan natural environment and the appropriation of its physical resources. The bulk of grammar, syntax, terminology, and orthography used in the Bon ritual texts however, are unquestionably part of a literary tradition post-dating the creation of the Tun-huang manuscripts in the Eighth to Tenth centuries. This demonstrates that even if the cult of protective deities is atavistic in nature, it underwent substantial modification—in accordance with historical, cultural and linguistic developments—in order to assume its present configuration only after the Tenth century.

In order to elicit further discussion and inquiry into the crucial subject of pre-Imperial remnant traditions in Upper Tibet, I will propose hypothetical chronological parameters based on my archaeological observations. It can be cogently argued that at least some of what survives of the native heritage represents relict Iron Age cultural traditions, which prevailed in Upper Tibet as late as the Seventh century. Scant archaeological evidence suggests that the Iron Age continued as an anachronistic cultural and political system in Tibet until the onset of the Imperial period, in the early Seventh century (Bellezza 2002a). There are two major factors in my opinion that warrant not assigning the earliest layer of ritual traditions to the posterior Imperial period. First of all, to do so would be to postulate that archaic tradition, as represented in certain Tun-huang manuscripts (such as *PT 1038, PT 1042, PT 1068, PT 1134, PT 1136,* etc.) and early epigraphic sources (as well as later cognate sources)

arose in a virtual historical vacuum. I think this very unlikely because the highly evolved cultural systems, which are reflected in various rituals for the propitiation of the indigenous pantheon and the funerary rites of high status individuals in the Tun-huang manuscripts, seem to be the product of long-standing tradition.[42] Such complex

[42] More recent cultural importations notwithstanding. The antiquity of certain Tibetan funerary rituals is explicitly stated in two of the Tun-huang manuscripts. These passages seem to indicate that special funerary practices were already very old by the Imperial period but their semantic and historical significance is very difficult to judge. The rituals under investigation are found in the context of those who died in the most tragic circumstances and were composed to illustrate their efficacy in any circumstances (I have worked extensively on Tun-huang funerary texts and Bon funerary ritual cycles and will present my findings in the textual section of my next book on the pre-Buddhist archaeology of Upper Tibet, which shall be entitled *Antiquities of High Tibet*). The relevant passages are concerned with the use of *do-ma* (live sacrificial horses) and sacrificial yaks, and claim that these funerary customs were already ancient by the time they were written down. Based on archaeological evidence, this may well be the case because the bones and horns of ungulates are regularly excavated at grave sites throughout the Tibetan Plateau, encompassing all chronologies from the Neolithic through the Imperial period. At least in some instances these osteological remains appear to have been part of funerary ritual offerings. Belonging to the early corpus of Tun-huang manuscripts (based on the style of calligraphy, content and grammatical structure these texts are of the Eighth or Ninth century?), *Pelliot 1136* (lns. 30–60) relates how two captured sacred horses (*do-ma*) were employed by *gshen* ritualists to redeem a girl named lCam-lho rgyal byang-mo who died by suicide. Before her death she had become very depressed at the prospect of marriage to the lord of Zhang-zhung gu-ge. At the very end of the account we find: "In ancient times [the *do-ma*] was beneficial also, now it is beneficial. In ancient times [the *do-ma*] was meritorious also, now it is meritorious." (. . . *gna' phan da yang phan gna' bsod da yang bsod do /*). These lines can possibly be read as an aspirational prayer but this seems a less likely intention of their meaning: "May [the *do-ma*] also now be beneficial as it was beneficial in ancient times. May the [*do-ma*] also now be meritorious as it was meritorious in ancient times." In *Pelliot 1068* we encounter the same type of passage. It is tagged on to the end of an account about the value of a sacrificial *mdzo-mo* (female hybrid yak) in the *shid* (funeral) of a sister (lns. 53–60). Earlier in the text, we learn that the sister died a wretched death in a pigsty among the waste (*pag-brun*) while her brother was away hunting game. She had been terribly neglected by her stepmother (*ma-g.yar*). The end of the account states: "As it was beneficial in ancient times, it is also now beneficial. As it was meritorious in ancient times, it is also now meritorious." (. . . *gna' phan na da yang phano gna' bsod na da yang bsod do /*). These lines can also be read as an aspirational prayer but this is a less likely translation given their grammatical structure. Despite the seemingly explicit nature of the Tun-huang passages and what may be supporting archaeological evidence, their precise antiquity remains open to question. This uncertainty is due to the abstruse historical intricacies and methodological problems involved in gauging the antiquity of ritual tradition. Firstly, there may be some who would argue that the passages presented above are merely a literary contrivance to lend the Tun-huang rituals historical depth and legitimacy. I think it more plausible however, that these passages asserting the antiquity of the funerary rituals or components of the rituals found therein

anthropological phenomena as elaborate funerary practices, mythologies and rituals for indigenous deities usually require a good deal of time to endogenously innovate or successfully import. Also, the diffuse body of early tradition does not have a definite historic genesis, nor is it representative of an individual founder or singular religion, which is often the case with ancient legacies. If the origins of early tradition were contemporaneous with the Imperial period (as Tibetan Buddhism largely was), it seems to me that there should be definite historical indications to that effect in the Tun-huang manuscripts and other archaic Tibetan literature.

A second factor suggesting to me that the roots of early indigenous traditions existed before the Imperial period has to do with the ostensible temporal continuity exhibited by material constituents of Upper Tibet culture. Cultural links between the pre-Buddhist and Buddhist periods are indicated in both the rock art record and various monumental forms of Upper Tibet (Bellezza 2001; 2002a). Although these archaeological assets largely remain undated, there is architectural and settlement evidence implying that they were created not only as part of the archaic cultural substratum but in the historic period (as late as the 12th century?) as well. The *rdo-khang* (all-stone residences) at Mount Ti-se are an excellent case in point (Bellezza 2002a: 62–75). As my extensive work on the subject shows, there are also substantial figurative and symbolic rock art depictions that appear to have been produced in both the pre-Buddhist and Buddhist periods, which have much compositional cohesion (such as the hunting of wild herbivores, bi-triangular animal forms, raptors with outstretched wings, swastikas, etc.). The same general cultural pattern of pertinacity is also discernable in the motifs of copper alloy

can be taken quite literally and reflect tradition established well before the Tenth century. The word *gna' bo* (ancient time) in Bon ritual tradition generally refers to events that are believed to have occurred centuries if not millennia ago, but perhaps such a liberal interpretation of the passages is unwarranted here? In the fourth quarter of the Eighth century, Tibet appears to have undergone cultural upheaval with the state-sponsored prosecution of Bon, and in the mid-Ninth century the imperium collapsed. It is therefore conceivable that ancient in the context of the passages merely refers to events that took place before the late Eighth century, in a cultural and political environment so different as to qualify in the authors' mind as ancient. Yet, even if the passages are taken on their word as reflecting long established funerary tradition this still begs the question; what is actually ancient: the ritual in its entirety, specific liturgical or symbolic elements of the ritual, or simply the diffuse tradition (the non-specific connection of such burial rites to those of pre-Imperial times)?

artifacts of the *thog-lcags* class. Likewise, it appears that all-stone corbelled fortresses and religious edifices and funerary pillar monuments persisted from deep in the pre-Imperial period[43] until historical times. These possible prominent anachronisms in the material culture suggest in themselves that historic Upper Tibet preserved paleocultural traditions to a significant degree. If indeed my hypotheses of an unbroken chronological progression in the creation of monuments, rock art and small metallic objects is correct, we can presuppose that the same holds true for certain forms of intangible culture. That is to say, a prehistoric-historic material culture continuum must perforce have correspondences in the abstract cultural record of Upper Tibet. A corollary of my hypotheses suggesting long-standing cultural continuity is that the oldest aspects of the corpus of indigenous ritual traditions predate the early historic period in Tibet. While this view cannot be scientifically verified, surely the development of an elaborate network of ancient monuments in Upper Tibet cannot but reflect the existence of a commensurate ideational fabric in the society that founded them.

Are we then to accept conventional Bon claims that their religion is 18,000 years old? I think not in any literal sense. The habitual usage of iron (*lcags*) implements and technologies by the deities of the rituals and the ancient officiants themselves seems to indicate that most, if not all, of the potentially pre-Imperial relict material arose from traditions no more ancient than the developed Tibetan Iron Age.[44] Cross-cultural archaeological comparisons with India, China and Mongolia suggest that the Iron Age did not become firmly entrenched in Tibet until the middle or late First Millennium BC (Bellezza 2002a). It can therefore, be inferred that the routine citation

[43] Foot tarsals extracted from a tomb located between two funerary pillar complexes at Khang-dmar, sGer-rtse county, provide the oldest calibrated dates for an Upper Tibet archaeological asset yet obtained. These bones have yielded a conventional radiocarbon age of 2740 +/− 40 years before present. Details of this and other radiocarbon analyses will feature in my forthcoming work on the archaeology of Upper Tibet.

[44] I do not negate the possibility that some Iron Age features are, in fact, representative of reconfigured earlier traditions, but these may not be discernable in extant literary and ethnographic materials. A potential example could be the Eneolithic use of naturally occurring gold, silver and meteoric iron for ornamentation. This at least is the paleocultural pattern found among the Afanasevo culture of the Minusinsk Basin of the end of the Third Millennium and beginning of the Second Millennium BC (Okladnikov 1990: 79, 80).

of iron instruments as attributes of deities and as offering articles, and associated vestigial ritual traditions surrounding the cult of indigenous deities, sprung up no earlier than the Iron Age, a maximum of 1200 years before the first diffusion of Buddhism into Tibet.[45] This possible Iron Age antiquity, as reflected in themes found in the texts under examination, is insinuated by the following general cultural traits of Eurasian societies in the Iron Age:

1) The widespread currency of the element iron as a metaphor for power and as an esteemed attribute of material objects.
2) The existence of a priestly class closely allied with the ruling class, which was involved in the placation and exploitation of natural forces.
3) The extensive use of wild carnivores and raptors as religious and political power symbols.
4) The employment of elaborate magic and divination rituals in which animal sacrifice and animal parts played an important role.
5) The highly elevated status of the riding horse, and its participation in various religious observances.
6) The dominant martial and warlike bearing of elite social facets of the population, including the priesthood.

[45] Providing that it is actually old enough, I maintain that indigenous ritual material may also belie a paleoclimatic bias. The long list of proscriptions associated with the environment-bound pantheon and the brutal eagerness of these deities to punish those who transgress the indigenous ecological sanctions can possibly be related to the pronounced deterioration in Tibet's climate. These negative environmental changes intensified in the First Millennium BC with the onset of the Late Holocene. The increasingly difficult environmental conditions could have had a considerable impact on the way in which the personalities of the mountain and lake deities were perceived by those who petitioned them. As they dispensed less and less of their life-giving boons, their capricious and dangerous aspects may have been reinforced, thus playing a formative role in the way in which the cult of indigenous protective deities evolved in Tibet. I hold however, that an even larger impetus for the mercenary and strident tone of the ritual language for wrathful deities may have been Imperial period sectarian rivalries between Buddhists and the adherents of pre-Imperial religious traditions. Conceivably, it is in such circumstances that the most ferocious litanies developed, to be preserved in post-Tenth century Bon liturgies. For a résumé of paleoclimatic studies in Tibet see Bellezza 2001, pp. 8–16; 2002, pp. 12–14. For a graph of estimated average temperature change on the Tibetan plateau see Tang Huisheng and Zhang Wenhua 2001, p. 166.

To complete this introduction to the textual traditions of mountain gods and other indigenous deities, let us turn to a popular Bon myth framed in the distant past when the founder of the Bon religion sTon-pa gshen-rab brought religion to Tibet. The account of the subjugation of the Tibetan people and deities pronounces the Bon identity and antiquity of the indigenous pantheon. Nevertheless, this theme closely parallels that found in the Buddhist *Lha 'dre bka' thang* of Gu-ru rin-po-che, set in the Eighth century. Save for the names of indigenous mountain gods and classes of deities, the myth contains no demonstrable archaic lore. A lively version of the Bon tale set at Mount Ti-se (Gangs rin-po-che), in Zhang-zhung, is found in the well-known 19th century pilgrimage guide *Ti se'i dkar chag*.[46] It is difficult to judge how much of this account was derived from earlier sources and how much of it represents a 19th century attempt at reclaiming or fabricating a Bon pre-Imperial heritage. Be that as it may, this *Ti se'i dkar chag* excerpt furnishes a clear doctrinal indication of how autochthonous mountain and other environment-based deities are thought to have been incorporated into the Bon pantheon.

In addition to subduing the Tibetans and their indigenous pantheon, other nations belonging to the eighteen great countries (*yul-chen bco-brgyad*) were brought under control by gShen-rab and bound to an oath to uphold the Bon *bstan-pa* (doctrine). According to the *Ti se'i dkar chag*, the *bdud* demons, accompanied by the Tibetan tribes living southeast of Lhasa and their allies from other countries, crossed into Zhang-zhung from the northwestern land of sTag-gzig (para i). In order to meet them, gShen-rab and his disciples descended to Ti-se armed with omnipotent powers of meditation (paras ii, iii). The three greatest mountain deities of Tibet, Ti-se, gNyan-chen thang-lha and Pom-ra and the large circle of female deities (*sman* and *brtan-ma*) sent horrific spectacles against gShen-rab—but they were no match for him and were easily defeated (para iv). Thus subdued, the indigenous pantheon and people of Tibet and adjoining countries were bound to the Bon religious oath (paras v, vi). gShen-rab then ordered that the indigenous pantheon protect and serve the people and their religion:

[46] *'Dzam gling gangs rgyal ti se'i dkar chag tshangs dbyangs yid phrog*, by dKar-ru grub-dbang bstan 'dzin (born 1801), (*mDzod phug rtsa ba dang spyi don dang gangs ti se'i dkar chag*, nos. 491–657), nos. 556, ln. 3 to 559, ln. 3.

(i) [sTon-pa gShen-rab] conquered the innumerable worlds (*stong-gsum*) and established the happiness [of the beings] of the *khams-gsum* (three worlds). He subjugated the three planes of existence (*srid-gsum*) and elevated the welfare of living beings. The envious *bdud* of the realm of darkness quarreled [with sTon-pa]. Accompanied by [the people] of Nyang, Srin and Kong they stole his horses. The [*bdud*] traversed the very jagged mountain wall of sTag-gzig and came to the area around the sources of the Chu-bo bzhi (Four Rivers) of Tibet.[47] The *bdud*, Phrom, Ge-sar,[48] Mongolia,[49] 'Jang,[50] and the red-faced Tibetans of Nyang, Dag and Kong, etc. gathered an army. They declared that they stood opposed to the gShen.[51] Their armor and weapons were readied.

(ii) Also, in that time and period, the omniscient and victorious one of the good epoch, the excellent gShen-rab, in order to keep the Doctrine for posterity, for future generations, would subdue living beings in a moment, conquer the demon realm and convert the impure atheists (*mtha' 'khob*) to Bon. The bodies of King gShen-rab and his four chief disciples stood for the moral law (*tshul-khrims*). They beckoned the friend of charity. They wore the armor of forbearance and rode the horse of right effort. They called the assembly of compassion and held the weapon of wisdom.

(iii) Engaging in unwavering meditation in the *'od-gsal ngang* (sphere of clarity),[52] they descended to the center of an eight-petalled crystal lotus, on the peak of the king of the snow mountains Ti-se, located in the middle of the Four Rivers of Tibet, in the country of Zhang-zhung, the quintessence of the eighteen great countries. [gShen-rab] remained in the meditation of existence subjugation.[53] The various types of radiance from his body, speech, mind, qualities, and activities spread to the countries of Zhang-zhung and Tibet, as well as the other eighteen great countries. The earth quaked, the mountains shook and the ocean

[47] West—Glang-chen gtsang-po (Elephant River, the Sutlej); North—Seng-ge gtsang-po (Lion River, the Indus); East—rTa-mchog gtsang-po (Excellent Horse River, the Brahmaputra); and South—rMa-bya gtsang-po (Peacock River, the Karnali).

[48] Phrom ge-sar is usually a singular geographic entity probably corresponding with regions in Eastern Turkestan.

[49] rGya. This usually denotes China but Mongolia seems more appropriate in this context.

[50] Also spelled lJang. This probably corresponds with Nan-chao in Yunnan.

[51] Refers to gShen-rab and his four chief disciples (*mtshan-ldan khye'u*); rMa-lo, g.Yu-lo, Yid kyi khye'u-chung, and gTo 'bum-sangs.

[52] This refers to the omniscient qualities of gShen-rab, such as his ability to see the true nature of the mind.

[53] *Zil-gnon ting-nge 'dzin.* A form of meditation in which sentient beings are brought under the auspices of religion.

was upset. Rainbows and clouds covered [the earth] and flowers fell down like rain.

(iv) As a result, all quickly scrambled to gather. Altogether, Ti-se the leader and his orders of Zhang-zhung *lha*, Thang-lha the leader and his orders of Tibetan *lha*, Pom-ra the leader and his orders of eastern Tibetan *rma*,[54] and all 990,000 assemblies of the *sman* of existence and the twelve *brtan-ma* protectors of the world made visible a terrible army being called to action, as well as a wrathful mien while displaying a fiery hurricane, thunderbolts, magic bombs, black clouds, thunderous sounds, and as many [other] evil occurrences through sorcery as they could. The body emanation (*sprul-pa'i sku*) of the victorious one, gShen-rab manifested in the form of bDud 'dul gsang-ba drag-chen (Great Fierce Secret Conqueror of Demons).[55] He revealed this destroyer manifestation with sharp arrows, magic bombs (*dzwo*), *this*[56] and spells (*sngags*) to the assembly of *lha* and *'dre*. Simultaneously, the magical manifestations of all the *lha* and *'dre* were neutralized.

(v) [The *lha* and *'dre* avowed] not to transgress the commands of gShen-rab and not to renounce their oath. Each of them offered him the heart-syllable of their life-force (*srog*), the vital syllable, and promised to protect the Doctrine of the victorious one, gShen-rab. They drank the water of the oath and were essentially bound to the oath. As a sign of his precepts (*bka' rtags*), [gShen-rab] placed the swastika of turquoise on their head. [He said], "Until the exhaustion of the Doctrine of the gShen in the [distant] future, when you are called, come; when religion is practiced, come around; when you are ministered to, protect; and when you are sent, go quickly. You are entrusted with the appointment to protect the Doctrine of Bon (Bon gyi bstan)."

(vi) He conferred upon [the *lha* and *'dre*] the name 'Oath-Holders with the Wisdom Eye'. As the [people] of Phrom, Mongolia, 'Jang, Ge-sar, the red-faced Tibetans (*gdong dmar* Bod), and a part of the *bdud*[57] could not oppose him, they gathered around sTon-pa and bowed their heads.

[54] The *rma* is an ancient class of deity corresponding to the *lha*, which are often associated with the great mountain A-myes rma-chen spom-ra, in A-mdo. rMa is also an ancient clan name.

[55] A form of the Bon tutelary deity Ge-khod.

[56] Three categories of magic rites. See Part Four, section iii, pp. 399 (fn. 197).

[57] Popularly, it is said that some of the *bdud* were able to escape, explaining the continued existence of demons not bound to a religious oath.

v) *Introduction to Part Four: spirit-mediums in the Bon literary tradition*

By closely examining Bon textual materials, this part of the book probes the legendary origins of spirit-mediumship more fully than is possible through the etiologic myths of the *lha-pa*. In the Bon tradition, spirit-mediumship is categorized as a form of divination found in the Phya-gshen vehicle, the first of nine systems of teachings. As we shall see, Bon tradition alleges that the *srid-pa'i sgra-bla* were one class of possessing deities in pre-Imperial times. This part of the book begins with an exposition of spirit-mediumship in the Bon tradition (*lha yi bka' bab*) in which its legendary and liturgical roles in the Phya-gshen vehicle are delineated. The central figure in the Phya-gshen classification of divination is Phu-wer, an ancient pacific deity. The three texts available for Phu-wer are scrutinized in section ii, in order to compare and contrast analogous rituals employed by the spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet. These texts show that the appearance, function and offerings regimen of this god are not unlike those of the *lha-ri*.

Through a variety of textual passages, the liturgies, functions and cosmogonic roles of the *srid-pa'i sgra-bla* will also be analyzed in section iii. The textual translations provided show that despite the *srid-pa'i sgra-bla* having a higher status in Bon doctrinal reckonings, they bear much resemblance to the mountain deities. The comprehensive comparison of the *srid-pa'i sgra-bla* and mountain gods compiled in this section of the book reveal many striking similarities between the deities of spirit-mediumship in the Bon and *lha-pa* traditions. Although Bon differentiates the *srid-pa'i sgra-bla* and pantheon of environment bound spirits as higher and worldly deities respectively, manifold interconnections suggest that both classes of deities are derived from the same historical wellspring of tradition.

Positing a historical interrelationship between the *srid-pa'i sgra-bla* and *lha-ri* in the face of doctrinal distinctions in status that have arisen over the course of Bon literary tradition, readily admits of two hypotheses. One such hypothesis maintains that the *srid-pa'i sgra-bla* were the product of the indigenous pantheon (deities geographically bound to the Tibetan physical environment) coming under Imperial period Buddhist influence. This led to the ambit of divination rites, protective rituals and clan traditions being divested from 'worldly deities' such as the *lha-ri* and installed in this more superior group of divinities. The other historical hypothesis is only permissible if we are prepared to entertain the Bon contention that the *srid-pa'i sgra-bla* were indeed part of their pre-Imperial religious tradition. This hypothesis holds that the *srid-pa'i sgra-bla*, as well as other Bon protective deities covered in this work (Hur-pa, Mi-bdud and Yum-sras), were partly shorn of their mountain and lake identities to create a new class of deities as part of changes in religious culture, which occurred in the pre-Seventh century Iron Age. These speculative historical scenarios raise intriguing and important questions relating to the cultural development of Upper Tibet. Perhaps archaeological investigations will eventually put to rest such questions concerning the historical validity of Bon's early pantheon.

vi) *Introduction to Part Five: Bon literary references to the ritual implements and practices of the spirit-mediums*

In this final part of the book, we examine textual sources that shed light upon the implements and techniques used by the spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet. The placement of the tradition of spirit-mediumship in the Bon Phya-gshen vehicle appears to be reflected in the antiquity of the possessing deities, and in the ceremonial paraphernalia and activities of the trance. Like the native divinities, the material objects and ritual techniques that endow the trance ceremony with its characteristic form are surrounded by a mythic mantle of great age. Through religious mythology and legendary early practitioners, Bon texts clearly identify the ceremonial elements of spirit-mediumship with the pre-Imperial cultural milieu. In Bon historico-ritual notions objects such as the *gshang*, drum and arrow, as well as the ritual techniques of fumigation, lustration, exorcistic missiles and fortune-summoning are often attributed to Zhang-zhung masters and deities. There may be a degree of historical validity to some of these claims in that archaeological evidence indicates that copper alloy *me-long* and arrowheads are instruments with a very long history in Tibet.

The manner of usage of the ritual instruments and their apotropaic and fortune-bestowing functions in Bon literature parallels their application in the trance ceremony of the spirit-mediums. The style of liturgical performance and the purported efficacy of the ritual

techniques also share a common basis in the literary and oral sources. These correspondences indicate a high degree of historic cross-fertilization of the indigenous tradition. As a result, the literary and oral aspects of native traditions are often shown to be interrelated and even interchangeable.

PART TWO: INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED WITH SPIRIT-MEDIUMS

i) *bsTan-grag lha-pa, born circa 1925*

Interviewed in Yar-lang village, 'Dam-gzhung, October 16 and 17, 1997.

bsTan-grag lha-pa[1] resides in Yar-lang, one of the five major settlements of sNying-drung township, 'Dam-gzhung county.[2] His family name, which belongs to two related households, is bsTan-grag, explaining why he is known as the bsTan-grag lha-pa. He reports being initiated as a spirit-medium at around 20 years of age by the previous reincarnation of the sTag-lung bka' brgyud lama rMa-sprul rin-po-che.[3] According to the bsTan-grag lha-pa, he is one of only two or three elderly spirit-mediums left on the south side of gNyan-chen thang-lha, in the 'Dam and Yangs-pa-can region.[4] It therefore appears that the tradition of spirit-mediumship is on the verge of extinction in these locales, as it is in much of northern and western Tibet.

bsTan-grag lha-pa declares that he is a medium for three of the most important *chos-skyong* (religious protectors) of the bKa' brgyud subsect, sTag lung: dGe-bsnyen (Householder Vows One), g.Ya' dmar (Red Slate), and bDud-btsan. As we shall see, it would appear that

[1] Mention, but not by name, of bsTan-grag lha-pa is found in Bellezza 1997, p. 63. Since the time of my interviews this exceptionally fine individual has passed away.

[2] The five main areas of sNying-drung are Yar-lang, sTod-lung, Bar-gling, sMad-gling, and Chu-tsan. In addition, there are reportedly 34 satellite settlements in the modern township. In the pre-Communist period, the center of the administrative district of sNying-drung (old name: gNyan-grong) was a local fort called sBas-tshang rdzong, headed by a *rdzong-dpon* (district officer). The district was divided into nine camps (gNyan-grong sger-gzhung dgu), which were owned by various 'Bras-spungs monastery colleges, government departments and aristocrats. Although sNying-drung is now part of 'Dam-gzhung county, in the pre-Communist period the eight camps of 'Dam ('Dam-brgya shog-brgyad) constituted a separate administrative entity.

[3] This is the incarnate lama Thub-btsan 'jigs-med chos-mchog (1916–1975).

[4] In addition to the bsTan-grag lha-pa, there was a *dpa' mo* (female spirit-medium) of advanced age in sNying-drung township. I did not have the opportunity to interview her.

the origin of these three deities predates the establishment of the sTag-lung subsect in the 12th century, and that they were adopted as *chos-skyong* to strengthen the bonds between the monastic and lay societies. These chief sTag-lung-pa *chos-skyong*[5] are also common *A-pha'i lha* (family protective deities) in the region[6] as well as objects of spirit-mediumship. Due to bsTan-grag lha-pa's intimate association with the sTag-lung protectors, his religious status is thought to be much higher than those *lha-pa* that only channeled the commonplace 'worldly' spirits. Both sTag-lung lamas and laymen I have spoken to seem to share this notion of his prestige.

bsTan-grag lha-pa reports also being a medium for rDo-rje rkyang-khra (Adamantine Varied Colored Onager), a *btsan* class protector deity of the erstwhile gNam-ru district. bsTan-grag lha-pa notes that

[5] It appears that the inclusion of these deities in the healing practices of bsTan-grag lha-pa had the effect of strengthening the religious and social links between the community and the sTag-lung subsect. Hardly esoteric guardians ensconced in monasteries, in the context of spirit-mediumship, the sTag-lung protectors were visibly manifest, and seen as instrumental in the health and well-being of the community.

[6] *A-pha'i lha* (father's god) is a popular term for a family protective deity found throughout Upper Tibet and Khams, which regulate the *phywa-g.yang* (modalities for good fortune) of a family. My research shows that in the Byang-thang they are often synonymous with the *phugs-lha* (according to the *'brog-pa*, the word *phugs* means 'innermost' and refers to one's direct ancestors), and are also equated with the *pho-lha* (personal deity of males) and the *khyim-lha* (household deity). However, in an invocatory text found in the *Lha bsangs rgyags brngan* ritual cycle, the *phug-lha* (different spelling) are referred to in the female gender (Namkhai Norbu 1995: 73, 74, 251), thus in this context they closely correspond to the *mo-lha* (personal deity of females). *A-pha'i lha* is also frequently synonymous with the *pha-mes-lha* (patriline guardian deity) and the *rus-lha/rus-rgyud-lha/rus-pa'i lha/gdung-rgyud-lha* (clan protective deity) of earlier times however, it would appear that at one time these represented separate types of deities. In the sNying-drung, 'Dam and gNam-mtsho regions the *A-pha'i lha* are frequently sTag-lung and 'Bri-gung bka' brgyud subsect *bstan-srung* (protectors of Buddhism). It appears that these bKa' brgyud protectors were adopted as *A-pha'i lha* to help strengthen the social, political and economic bonds between the lay and monastic communities. While in some cases, these deities may have played a role in the origin myths of certain clans, such beliefs are no longer well articulated. Rather than symbols of genealogical origination or ancestral deistic relationships, these spirits now serve a protective role for individual households and as symbols of kinship. *A-pha'i lha* live in the home or tent and where they exist their *rten* (support or residence) is often a *mda' dar* (arrow festooned with colored ribbons, a small metal mirror and cowry shells), a fortune-bestowing instrument. The majority of *'brog-pa* families follow the *A-pha'i lha* of the male head of household but there are significant cases when an *A-pha'i lha* is derived from the female side of the family. This usually occurs when a man is brought to live in his wife's household but also as an elective practice in certain families.

this deity is also known by the appellation Byang gi lha (Northern God). He is said to reside on a hillock in the middle of a great plain, north of dPa' mtsho, in what is now dPal-mgon county. rDo-rje rkyang-khra is one of the best known offspring of the great mountain god gNyan-chen thang-lha.[7] bsTan-grag lha-pa envisions rDo-rje rkyang-khra as a multicolored blue, white, red, black, and yellow deity mounted on a *rkyang*. He has a wonderous appearance and, although slightly wrathful, is extremely helpful. rKyang-khra is attired in gold silk robes, wears a *rigs-lnga* headdress, and is aiming a bow and arrow. He is also said to be the gamekeeper of gNyan-chen thang-lha's herds of *rkyang*.

bsTan-grag lha-pa also states that he is a medium for another *btsan* class deity Chos-skyong btsan-dmar (Red bTsan Dharma Defender), a protector of the dGon-pa gsar-ba monastery in Chu-btsan village, sNying-drung township. bsTan-grag lha-pa notes that his paternal uncle was also a spirit-medium for Chos-skyong btsan-dmar, illustrating the family connection that usually exists for *lha-pa*.[8]

Behind bsTan-grag lha-pa's house are three of the local *rten-mkhar/gsas-mkhar*: masonry platforms containing precious substances, which are painted white with a lime solution. Incense is burnt at these shrines as offerings to the *lha-pa*'s personal deities. The north *rten-mkhar* is for the worship of rKyang-khra and bTsan-dmar; the central *rten-mkhar* is for the worship of the *A-pha'i lha* g.Ya'-dmar; while the south *rten-mkhar* is for the *yul-lha* (god of the locale) gNyan-chen thang-lha. bsTan-grag lha-pa's devotion to the deities of the trance is not therefore limited to spirit-mediumship, but an everyday household observance. His scrupulous devotion to these deities is symbolized by his construction of three *rten-mkhar*, while most families in the region only have one.

bsTan-grag lha-pa affirms that the main purpose of spirit-mediumship is to cure a host of diseases afflicting human beings. Some of

[7] See Bellezza 1997, pp. 56 for reference to rDo-rje rkyang-khra. Although this deity now typically assumes the guise of a *btsan*, with martial attire and warrior bearing, his name suggests that in the distant past he may have been a god in the form of a *rkyang* (Tibetan onager). Another medium for rDo-rje rkyang-khra is Sri-gcod (born circa 1938) who was born in sTod sba-ba. He now resides in the Hyangja refugee camp in Nepal. He reports having very little recollection of his activities while in trance. Reference to him is also found in Berglie 1976.

[8] The hereditary transmission of the profession was confirmed in a study of four *lha-pa* conducted in the early 1970s (Berglie 1976: 88).

these illnesses are believed to be caused by elemental spirits such as the *klu*, *lha* and *'dre* (but in his case, not the *gnyan* or *dmu*). bsTan-grag lha-pa states that during the trance, or the descent of the deities (*lha 'bab-pa*), he uses a white scarf to suck the illness-causing impurities from the client's body. According to bsTan-grag lha-pa, spirit-mediumship also served as a prognosticative tool. He also notes that a *li* (copper alloy) *me-long* (mirror) was conferred upon him by rMa-sprul rin-po-che which he wears during the trance.

bsTan-grag lha-pa states that in typical fashion, before the deities of the trance are invoked, offerings of *chang* (beer), barleycorn, butter, rice and incense are laid out in vessels before him. His costume consists of an antique gold-colored silk gown over which he wears a modern brocade mantle. In addition to the *me-long* that hangs over his chest, he displays amulets called *thog-lcags*; magical objects that appeal to the deities. His *rigs-lnga* headdress is attached to a peaked red hat (*btsan-zhwa*). Each of its five diadems features an image of one of the rGyal-ba rigs-lnga (cosmic directional Buddhas). As a prelude to the descent of the deities, bsTan-grag lha-pa burns *spos-dkar*, a resinous incense.[9] To summon the deities, he intones prayers he knows by memory (he is illiterate), while he bangs his *rnga* (a large hanging drum) with his right hand and rings a *gshang* (flat-bell) with his left hand.

bsTan-grag lha-pa claims that at the time of the trance the possessing deities would descend upon his *rigs-lnga*. He observes that dGe-bsnyen, the top sTag-lung-pa protector, is a supervisory deity and does not possess him. Instead, this *chos-skyong* is conceived of as overseeing the trance and the other deities involved in it. The work of diagnosis, healing and prognostication is said to be carried out by g.Ya' dmar, bDud-btsan and rDo-rje rkyang-khra. On the other hand, Chos-skyong btsan-dmar is the master of the ceremony and dance. bsTan-grag lha-pa states that while under possession he would dance and make utterances, all of which were orchestrated by this deity.

In the pre-Communist period, the broad interconnected valleys of Yangs-pa-can, sNying-drung and 'Dam were home to several other

[9] The white variety of *spos-dkar* (*Shorea robusta*) is native to Upper Tibet. Medicinally, it is used to treat swelling and lymph conditions. See Pasang Yonten Arya 1998, p. 134.

practicing *lha-pa*. According to bsTan-grag lha-pa, a well-known and respected spirit-medium that lived at gNam mtsho until his death an estimated 35 years ago, was named Pho-ma-la. He was a spirit-medium for the rTa-rgo deity Gangs-lung lha-btsan. In the Yangs-pa-can area there was a spirit-medium named La-thog lha-pa, hailing from the village of dKar-gangs, who died perhaps 25 years ago. Reportedly, he was a medium for minor *btsan* deities. bsTan-grag lha-pa remarks that the last medium in the sNying-drung region for Thang-sras mchor-po (Handsome Son of the Plain), the well-known son of gNyan-chen thang-lha, was called the gSang-phug lha-pa. He passed away about fifteen years ago. According to bsTan-grag lha-pa, a spirit-medium residing near the border between 'Dam and sNying-drung was named Lha-rnams and titled the Me-khe lha-pa after his main possessing deity.[10] He is said to have died roughly 20 years ago.

[10] Me-khe is the deified ancient king Nyi-ma 'brug-sgrags of the dBus-stod region. The following information on Me-khe constitutes a summary of an unpublished manuscript about the deity recently authored by the lama Zur-mkhas lhag-pa tshe-ring upon my request. It was authorized by sTag-lung skyabs-mgon rtse-sprul, the most senior member of the sTag-lung bka' brgyud subsect. According to the sTag-lung-pa, this powerful king resided in the locale of Me-chen at a castle called Lha-mtsho. His subjects conspired against him after he ordered that they demolish a mountain, because it was blocking the sun from his castle. Around one hundred people are said to have been killed trying to remove the mountain. Consequently, the King's subjects made his horse go mad by keeping it confined to a dark stable for several months; when the King rode the horse at a celebration he plunged to his death in a deep ravine. After recovering King Nyi-ma 'brug-sgrags' body at Chu-rgyud rgyal-po'i lha-kha, a place above Lhasa, his subjects carried it back to Me-chen on a bier via the 'Phen-po sgo-la, Chag-la (so named because the bier broke here) and 'Drud-la (called such because the King's corpse was pulled over it). At the King's cremation ceremony his mother discovered that there had been a plot against her son. This she did by observing the reaction of the King's subjects: they expressed remorse for having murdered him only after witnessing white smoke going straight into the sky from his pyre, a sign that he was about to achieve enlightenment. Nonetheless, the mother beseeched her dead son to return and exact his revenge. The white smoke returned to the cremation grounds, and the *rnam-shes* (consciousness) of the dead king remained there for seven days. Consequently, the *rnam-shes* took a wrong turn and was reborn as the malevolent spirit Me-khe. It commenced to slay all those who conspired against King Nyi-ma 'brug-grags, as well as many others, and retained them as his spirit servants. When the first sTag-lung hierarch sTag-lung thang-pa bkra-shis-dpal (born 1142) learned about these events, he brought Me-khe and his retinue under an oath to uphold the Buddhist doctrines, and made him his special protector. He has remained a *bstan-srung* (protector of the sTag-lung lineage and doctrine) since that time. Me-khe wears a red turban, black dress and the flayed skin of a human. In his right hand he holds a black spear and banner, and in his left a triangular red *gtor-ma* (offering sculpture). His mount is a black horse

As we have seen, the three chief sTag-lung protective deities, dGe-bsnyen, g.Ya' dmar and bDud-btsan, are very important to bsTan-grag lha-pa and his mediumship activities. In sTag-lung tradition, their origin is attributed to the death of an individual named Thang-lha 'bar-ba in the late 12th century. The patronage of the sTag-lung, the founder of the subsect, and their special protective deities are all traced to three branches of the Ga-zi clan. According to the sTag-lung-pa, the protector dGe-bsnyen is said to have appeared from the corpse of Thang-lha 'bar-ba, while g.Ya' dmar and bDud-btsan and six other protectors, along with their vast circles of spirits, arose from eight droplets of blood that fell from the corpse. Recently, a small history of these protectors was authored by the sTag-lung bka' brgyud monk bsTan 'dzin kun-dga' entitled *The Unfolded History of the Splendid Tiger Country bKa' brgyud Protector of the Doctrine dGe-bsnyen*).[11] This text is mainly derived from the oral accounts of elderly sTag-lung monks, but other sources of information include the religious history *sTag-lung chos 'byung* and the invocatory texts for dGe-bsnyen. Original textual sources for the history of the sTag-lung protectors reportedly were lost in the Chinese Cultural Revolution.

The mountain deities and other indigenous protectors trace their origins to the primordial past, or the beginning of the world, and are therefore often referred to in Tibetan literature as *srid-pa'i-lha* (deities of existence). On the other hand, the sTag-lung protectors—as well as certain other Buddhist protectors—have a historical theogony and are attributed to the often violent social events that occurred. In the case of dGe-bsnyen and associated sTag-lung protectors, their

[11] *dPal stag lung bka' brgyud kyi bka' srung dge bsnyen byung rim.* The colophon reads: "This is what has been said by the elderly monks. Although I have heard several times [these things], I do not know about the supporting evidence and the source. I have written down what I could remember. I apologize in front of the Triple Gems and the ocean of oath-holding [deities], and especially to the all-protecting, adamantine defenders of the [sTag-lung] doctrine for whatever mistakes I have made." (*grwa rgan rabs rnams kyis gsung kyi 'dug par / rgyab rten tshad ma dang khung lung ji yod mi shes kyang rang gis thos pa rnams gang dran bris pa yin / nor 'khrul nyes tshogs ci mchis / mchog gsum dam can rgya mtsho dang / lhag par bka' srung rdo rje kun skyobs kyi spyan snga ru mthol lo bshags /*). Upon my request, sTag-lung skyabs-mgon ma-sprul rin-po-che authorized the composition of this text. I then brought it to sTag-lung skyabs-mgon rtse-sprul rin-po-che for his inspection. I express my gratitude to these illustrious scholars for their kind support. Spelling corrections and modern equivalents in the transliteration of this and other texts in this work are preceded by an = sign and are parenthesized.

origins are seen as representing the unfolding of a complex process of karma. The protagonist of the story, Thang-lha 'bar-ba, is killed by the *yul-lha* of sTag-lung char-rje because of his terrible hunting excesses;[12] yet because in his previous life he was a member of the pious Ga-zi clan, his death was to bring much benefit to sentient beings.

In the history of the sTag-lung protectors, the *yul-lha* Char-rje is clearly a deity that predates dGe-bsnyen. The archaic appellations of the other members of his entourage also indicate antecedent origins. These figures seem to represent pre-existing deities or deities that were recast and brought into the sTag-lung doctrinal fold around the time of the founding of the subsect. For example, the well-known god rDo-rje-legs-pa,[13] existed during the *bstan-pa snga-dar* (first diffusion of Buddhism (para ix),[14] several hundred years before the founding of the sTag-lung-pa. Also in the sTag-lung circle is Lha-btsan ne-ra gnyen-po, whose name includes the word *ne-ra* (para ix), which seems to mean flower in the Zhang-zhung language. Another example of indigenous lore being incorporated by the Buddhist protectors is where Thang-lha 'bar-ba asks to be reborn as a *srid-pa'i lha-chen-po* (great god of existence) (para vi). The large circle of carnivorous animals in the retinues of dGe-bsnyen and his cohorts (para ix) is yet another feature that seems to be derived form native tradition.

In the history of the sTag-lung protectors presented here we can see the way in which these gods were created, and how they take precedence over what appear to be pre-existing indigenous deities. Murdered humans brought into the Buddhist pantheon—as in the *mi-shi btsan-skyes* (death of a person, birth of a *btsan*) phenomenon—was to become a popular religious theme during the period of dGe-lugs-pa ascendancy. However, the motives involved in the creation of these spirits were usually less noble than the circumstances surrounding the birth of the sTag-lung protectors. In any event, these

[12] The female state oracle Blo-bzang tshe-sgron was a medium for a patron of 'Bras-spungs monastery called dPa' bo, who likewise had been killed by a local deity, a *btsan-ma* goddess (Havnevik 2002: 268–270).

[13] For more lore about this deity see Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, pp. 155–159; Part Three, Section vii.

[14] In this text, as in all other Tibetan texts presented for translation in this work, I have arranged the sequence of paragraphs according to content. The employed paragraph scheme reflects story-line continuity and the liturgical structure of the rituals.

apotheosized historic figures probably became popular objects of spirit-mediumship from the 12th century onwards. The origin of dGe-bsnyen, a prototype for this class of deity, is written as follows:

(i) Among the six [great] clans of the Tibetans the dBra is represented. Among the [dBra] is the clan of Ga-zi from which the one known as Yon-ched bzang-po was born. He had three sons. His oldest son was 'Dod-na des-khyer, his middle son dGra-mig sa 'debs, and the youngest son was Glan-kha phar-bsko. The eldest of the lineage 'Dod-na des-khyer begot Ga-zi shākya bzang-po and he became the great leader of mDo-khams (eastern Tibet). Thereafter, until the present day, [his family] known as mDo-mkha' rag-kha-shar gzim-shag became the sponsors of the doctrine of the sTag-lung bka' brgyud. Members of this unbroken lineage are still doing the sponsorship of the sTag-lung [pa].

(ii) In the lineage of the middle son, dGra-mig sa 'debs, was born the glorious precious one sTag-lung thang-pa bkra-shis (in more recent times local people have called him Bal-blon 'bar-po). He presented himself respectfully to 'Gro-mgon (Protector of Living Beings) Phag-mo gru-pa, and fully mastered the stages of wisdom and the paths of enlightenment.[15] Afterwards, he founded sTag-lung monastery, and by propagating the monastic disciplinary traditions, the bKa' brgyud Buddhist doctrine was spread.

(iii) The youngest brother Glan-kha phar-bsko was not long lived. After his death, in 'Bro yi zang-zang, in upper gTsang, he was reborn as Thang-lha 'bar-ba (Blazing Plains God), the son of the one called 'Bro-rje btsan-po. How did he himself become the protector of sTag-lung? When the lord sTag-lung thang-pa the Precious One, came to sTag-lung, he established a modest chapel and remained in retreat. At that time, he bound the local *gzhi-bdag* (master of the land) Char-rje to a Buddhist oath, and commanded him: "You must become the protector of my doctrine." Char-rje replied, "To be the protector of your doctrine there must be a profound connection between karma and wishful prayer. The son of 'Bro-rje btsan-po has been born. Now I will plunder his life-force and offer it to you." Upon saying this he disappeared.

(iv) The son of 'Bro [rje btsan-po] Thang-lha 'bar-ba was himself always hunting wild ungulates. Moreover, he killed excessively because

[15] sTag-lung thang-pa bkra-shis-dpal was born in 1142 to Klu-dge shan-slon and Shing-bza' dge-gsum phro-mo in mDo-stod ku-g.yung-sgang. He founded sTag-lung monastery in 1180 and presided over its rapid expansion. He died in 1208. For general biographical information see Dung-dkar blo-bzang 'phrin-las 2002, pp. 1006, 1007.

wherever he went dogs and wolves followed him, and birds of prey soared overhead. Even though Char-rje always preyed on [Thang-lha 'bar-ba], he had an extremely powerful *srung 'khor* (talisman) on his body and therefore, he could not harm him. One day through the power of karma [Thang-lha 'bar-ba] took off his talisman and hung it on the guy-line of his tent while he washed his hair. Suddenly, a gust of wind came and the talisman was carried off by the wind. Thang-lha 'bar-ba had run after it for only a short distance before the gust of wind subsided. [He saw] the talisman hanging on the antlers of a deer, who with a broken leg was fleeing from him. Although he ran very quickly he could not overtake it, and he returned back to his residence.

(v) He then mounted his horse with his gun[16] slung over his back and went in pursuit [of the deer]. As usual, he was followed by dogs, birds and other animals. Despite following it on horseback for a long time, he could not overtake the deer. If he gave up the chase the deer laid down. When he ran in pursuit, it fled and he could not reach it. In this manner many days passed. Finally, in the location of sTag-lung monastery, on the lower reaches of the sunny side of the black mountain called Seng-lcam brag (Lioness Rock), he arrived to find the deer lying down. When he approached the base of the formation the deer was not there; instead there was a black man wearing armor and brandishing weapons. In his hand he kept the talisman. [Thang-lha 'bar-ba] was momentarily dumbstruck and stood motionless. The black man laughed loudly, "ha ha" and said these words, "I am the *gzhi-bdag* (owner of the place) of this country. There is a lama at that monastery over there that needs a supremely eminent protector of the doctrine. I am not able to be this but you by the efficacy of fervent prayer are able to. Now, I am about to cut your life-force. Before I kill you pray for whatever you wish. Also, I forecast that in your next life, I will become your minister."

(vi) Thang-lha 'bar-ba made three prayers: "Firstly, after you kill me, may I generally uphold the doctrine of the Buddha. Specifically, may I become the protector of the bKa' brgyud doctrine, and especially the *srid-pa'i lha chen-po* (great god of existence), incomparable to others, who protects the doctrine of oral transmissions. May I become the manifestation of a great protector deity. Secondly, may you never rise above the station of my horse-keeper. May you never attain a status higher than this. Thirdly, may no one be able to remove my corpse until my father arrives." Thus he spoke. Subsequently, he became the one known as dGe-bsnyen.

[16] *Me-mda'*. Surely however, the bow and arrow is actually meant here, as there were no firearms in the 12th century.

(vii) Immediately after making these prayers Thang-lha 'bar-ba, his horse, dogs, birds and other animals [present] had their life-forces cut. It is popularly said that by being reborn as the great, powerful wild *btsan*, even if a bird cast its shadow over the corpse it fell down to the plain. Having lost his son, the father 'Bro-rje btsan-po searched for him, asking people, one by one, where he had gone. Many informants described a horseman who went in pursuit of a deer with a broken leg. By listening to the words of those he met, he finally arrived at sTag-lung. He inquired with local people who said, "We do not know if it is your son or not, but at that formation over there is a human corpse. No one has been able to remove it. Despite being there for a long time it has not decomposed. When the shadow of birds flying overhead contact the corpse they perish."

(viii) The father 'Bro-rje went to see for himself and found that it was the body of his son. He came before the lord sTag-lung thang-pa and requested *'pho-ba* (conveyance of the consciousness). The lama said, "Your son does not need *'pho-ba*. He shall become the executor of the Doctrine. Transfer the corpse to the red slate house on the peak of the mountain from where it cannot see its own country." (This mountain is known by the name of g.Ya' sgang-rtse / Slate Ridge-Top). A guide was also dispatched. When the corpse was being carried along the way eight droplets of blood fell from it. These in succession became the eight great wild *btsan*, and along with [the corpse] there are nine.

(ix) From the first droplet of blood came g.Ya' dmar btsan-rgod chen-po. From the second droplet came bDud-btsan gle-bo mi-zan. These two are called the 'vanguard generals' (*ru-'dren dmag-dpon*) in command of one hundred thousand divisions of *btsan*. These three are called dGe-bsnyen gtso 'khor gsum (The Three, dGe-bsnyen the Chief and his Circle). After them, in succession, there are gNyan-btsan gnyan-stag dmar-po, Lha-rgod char-rje chen-po, dGra-lha rdo-rje legs-pa, Klu-btsan rdo-rje 'bar-ba, Blon-po bā yan char-rje, and Lha-btsan ne-ra gnyen-po. In addition to these eight there is dGe-bsnyen himself, who is called sPrag gi btsan-rgod chen-po. These are called the nine horsemen. In addition to these there is the one called Yum-chen gu-dkar smin-gcig. There also appeared another one hundred thousand divisions of *btsan*, 720 deputy ministers, 360 ministers, hawks, crows, tigers, leopards, wolves, other carnivorous animals, conch [white] dogs, conch [white] bitches, and innumerable inner and outer manifestations.

(x) In the recent [period] Buddha sTag-lung thang-pa, the precious one, oath-bound and bestowed *bodhisattva* and householder vows upon [the deities]. He bestowed the name bKa' srung dge-bsnyen rdo-rje kun-skyobs dpa' bo che (Guardians of the Doctrine with Householder Vows, Adamantine All-Protecting Great Heroes) on them, and served them the drink of the pledge of the adamantine oath. Since that time they have refrained from harming sentient beings and have been protecting the doctrine of the Buddha.

Transliteration of the dGe bsnyen byung rim *text*

(i) bod mi'u gdung drug gi nang tshan du gyur pa'i dbra / de'i nang tshan ga zi yi rus brgyud du sku 'khrungs pa'i / yon ched bzang po zhes bya ba de la / bu che ba 'dod na des khyer / 'bring po dgra mig sa 'debs / chung ba glan ka phar bsko gsum byung zhing / che ba 'dod na des khyer gyi brgyud du / gwa (= ga) zi shākya bzang po 'khrungs shing mdo khams kyi dpon che (= chen) byas rjes / stag lung bka 'brgyud kyi bstan pa'i sbyin bdag gyur te dus da lta'i bar du mdo mkha' rag kha shar gzim shag ces mi brgyud zam ma chad par stag lung dang mchod yon sbyin bdag gnas mus su mchis /

(ii) 'bring ba dgra mig sa 'debs kyi brgyud du / dpal stag lung thang pa bkra shis dpal rin po che 'di 'khrungs shing / (mchan 'di la phyis su yul mi rnams kyis bal blon 'bar po zhes 'bod) / khong gis 'gro mgon 'phags (= phag) mo grub (= gru) pa'i zhabs la gtugs shing sa lam gyi rtogs pa thams cad mthar phyin te phyis su stag lung dgon pa gsar 'debs kyis 'dul ba'i sde spel ba'i sgo nas bka' brgyud kyi bstan pa dar bar mdzad /

(iii) chung ba glan ka phar bsko yun ring ma 'tsho bar sku gshegs te skye ba phyi ma gtsang la stod 'bro yi zang zang du / 'bro rjes (= rje) btsan po zhes bya ba'i bu ru skyes te mtshan la 'bro sras thang lha 'bar ba zhes 'bod cing / 'di nyid stag lung gi bka' srung du gyur tshul ni / rje stag lung thang pa rin po che de nyid stag lung du phebs nas 'jag spyil lha khang bzhengs nas sku mtshams la bzhugs skabs / yul 'di'i gzhi bdag char rje dam la btags shing khyod kyis nga'i bstan srung byed dgos zhes bka' phebs skabs char rjes khyed kyi bstan pa srung ba la las smon gyi 'brel ba zab pa zhig da lta 'bro rje bstan po'i bu ru skyes 'dug par / ngas kho'i srog 'phrog ste khyed la 'bul lo zer nas mi snang bar gyur /

(iv) 'bro sras thang lha 'bar ba de nyid dus rtag tu ri dwags rngon pa rgyab kyi yod pa ma zad ha cang bsad che bas su khong ga par phebs kyang / khyi dang spyang ki rjes su 'brang zhing steng na

sha zan gyi bya rnams lding nas yong gi yod 'dug / char rjes rtag tu khong gi srog gtses kyang khong la srung 'khor shin tu btsan po zhig lus la yod rkyen gnod mi thub par lus / nyin zhig sngon las kyi dbang gis khong gis srung 'khor phud nas sbra yi chon thag la bkal te dbu skra 'khrud skabs glo bur du rlung 'tshubs rgyabs te srung 'khor rlung gis khyer / thang lha 'bar ba cung zad rjes su brgyugs par / rlung 'tshub 'jags te / shwa (= sha) ba rkang pa chag pa zhig gi rwa steng du srung 'khor khon te bros / mgyog por brgyugs kyang rjes ma zin pas slar nang du yar log nas /

(v) rta zhon me mda' khur nas rjes 'ded btang bar / rgyun ldan ltar khyi dang / bya sogs kyang rjes su 'brangs / khong gis rta zhon nas rjes 'ded yun ring byas kyang shwa (= sha) ba'i rjes mi zin / g.yug bzhag na shwa (= sha) ba de nyal nas sdod kyi yod / yang brgyugs na kho bros nas mi zin / de ltar byas nas nyin zhag mang po ded mthar stag lung dgon pa chag (= chags) pa'i nyin ri'i 'dabs su seng lcam brag ces pa'i brag nag po zhig yod pa der 'byor skabs shwa (= sha) ba de nyal nas sdod / brag rtsar slebs dus shwa (= sha) ba med cing mi nag po go mtshon thogs pa zhig gi lag tu rang gi srung 'khor de nyar nas yod par / khong ya mtshan skyes nas res (= re) zhig lang (= langs) bsdad par mi nag po des ha ha zhes gad mo chen po zhig bgad de brjod don / nga yul 'di'i gzhi bdag yin / pha gi'i dgon pa 'di la bla ma zhig yod / khong la bstan srung gzhan las khyad par 'phags pa zhig dgos 'dugs na / de ngas mi yong zhing khyod kyis yong ba'i sngon smon lam btsan po'i 'brel ba yod / da ngas khyod kyi srog gcod rgyu yin / khyed rang ma bsad gong du smon lam ga re 'debs rgyu yod kyang thobs / nga yang rjes su khyod kyi blon po 'gyur ba yin zhes lung bstan /

(vi) thang lha 'bar bas smon lam gsum btabs par / dang po nga khyod kyis bsad pa'i rjes su / spyir sangs rgyas bstan pa'i mel tshe / dgos bka' brgyud bstan pa'i bka' srung / lhag par tu (= du) snyan brgyud bstan pa srung ba la / srid pa'i lha chen po sus kyang 'gran par mi nus pa'i / sprul pa'i lha srung mthu bo che zhig 'gyur bar shog / gnyis pa / khyod dus rtag tu nga'i rta rdzi las go gnas 'phar rgyu med par shog / gsum pa / nga'i phung po 'di yab 'bro rje btsan po ma slebs bar du sus kyang sgul mi thub par shog / ces brjod par / phyis khong dge bsnyen gyi rta rdzi yang gyur bar (= par) grags / de ltar smon lam btabs zin pa dang / thang lha 'bar

ba mi dang rta khyi bya sogs tshang ma char rjes srog bcad ma thag btsan rgod mthu bo cher skyes te phung po yod sa'i steng bya grib phog kyang bya thang la lhung bar grags /

(vii) yab 'bro rje btsan pos bu bor brlags song ba rtsad gcod kyis rim bzhin mi la skad cha 'dri yin song bar rta pa zhig gis shwa (= sha) ba rkang chag zhig = gcig) ded nas phyin song zer mkhan mang po byung bas de dag gi ngag la nyan nas yong mthar stag lung du slebs / yul mi rnams la skad cha dris par / khyed kyi bu yin min mi shes / pha gi brag gi rtsar mi zhig gi phung po 'dug kyang / sus kyang sgul mi nus dus yun ring por song yang mi rul / brag steng bya 'phur skabs bya grib phung po la phog na bya shi 'gro ba zhig 'dug zer ba /

(viii) der phyin nas blta skabs rang gi bu yi phung po yin par shes nas rjes stag lung thang pa'i drung du khyer yong nas 'pho ba zhus pa / khong gis / khyed kyi bu la 'pho ba mi dgos / khos nga'i bstan pa la bya ba byed pa yin phung po 'di rang yul mi mthong pa'i (= ba'i) ri zhig gi rtser rdo g.ya' ma'i khang pa zhig yod pa der skyel gsungs (ri de'i ming la g.ya' sgang rtse zer) te lam mkhan mi zhig mngag gnang mdzad par de dang mnyam du phung po khyer nas 'gro skabs lam du phung po de las khrag thig brgyad zag pa las btsan rgod che brgyad rang dang dgu byung zhing de yang rim pa ltar /

(ix) khrag thig dang po las g.ya' dmar btsan rgod chen po / gnyis pa la / bdud btsan gle bo mi zan te btsan dmag 'bum sde'i kha lo ba / ru 'dren dmag dpon gnyis ces (zhes) 'bod la / 'di gsum la dge bsnyen gtso 'khor gsum zer de rjes rim pa ltar /gnyen (= gnyan) btsan gnyan stag dmar po / lha rgod char rje chen po / dgra lha rdo rje legs pa / klu btsan rdo rje 'bar ba / blon po bā yan char rje / lha btsan ne ra gnyen po ste brgyad kyi steng du / sprag gi btsan rgod chen po zhes dge bsnyen rang nyid bsnan pa'i dgu la rkya dgu zer cing / de'i steng du yum chen gu dkar smin gcig la brin gcig 'bod pa 'di dag la rkya dgu brin gcig zer / gzhan yang btsan dmag 'bum sde dang / phyi blon bdun brgya nyi shu / nang blon sum brgya drug cu / bya khra bya rog / stag gzig gcan spyang / khyi dung po dung mo / sprul pa yang sprul grangs las 'das pa rnams byung zhing /

(x) phyis su bde gshegs stag lung thang pa rin po ches dam la btags shing / byang chub sems sdom dang dge bsnyen gyi sdom pa bstsal te mtshan la / bka' srung dge bsnyen rdo rje kun skyobs dpa' bo che zhes stsal de (= te) dam tshig rdo rje'i mna' chu blud / dus de nas bzung ste / sems can la gnod 'tshe spangs te sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa srung bar mdzad cing bzhugs zhes /

ii) *Pho-bo dbang-phyug, born circa 1920*[17]

Interviewed in Pokhara, Nepal, June 18–20, and November 29 and 30, 1998.

Pho-bo dbang-phyug (also called dPa' bo dbang-phyug) is a well known spirit-medium from the Da-rog mtsho region of 'Brong-pa tsho-ba dgu ('Brong-pa county).[18] He was the object of a landmark study carried out 30 years ago by Berglie (1976; 1978; 1980), which I refer to here in a number of contexts. For many years the *lha-pa* has resided at the Hyangja refugee camp located on the outskirts of the Nepalese city of Pokhara. Pho-bo dbang-phyug lives in a small house where he still carries out his work as a spirit-medium. For some years he has kept a register of the people who have sought his help. In it they have written short notes explaining why they have come, and the amount money they have donated for his services. Pho-bo dbang-phyug does not directly charge for his work as a *lha-pa* but rather depends on the generosity of those he has aided. However, his Tibetan and Nepalese clients are traditionally acquainted with reciprocal arrangements and well understand that leaving an offering is imperative. Among his clientele are many from the Gurung ethnic group who live in the hills around Pokhara as well as several Westerners. According to the register, they come to Pho-bo dbang-phyug for a variety of physical and mental illnesses. One Western physician wrote that he was impressed with Pho-bo dbang-phyug, and that he had apparently cured him of chronic fatigue and insomnia.

[17] Berglie's study of Pho-bo dbang-phyug (1976: 87) estimates that he was been born around 1930. *Pho-bo* (elder brother) is a title of respect for senior males popularly used in Upper Tibet. This term is a synonym for the more commonly used *A-jo*.

[18] Pho-bo dbang-phyug connects archaeological sites in his homeland to the Bon-po and personalities in the Ge-sar epic. See Bellezza 1999, p. 76.

Pho-bo dbang-phyug refers to himself as dPa' rabs bcu-gsum, the thirteenth generation in a family lineage of spirit-mediums.[19] He is not able to list by name the members of his lineage and we should not take this number too literally, but rather to mean that he practices a centuries-old hereditary profession. The number thirteen is often used symbolically in the Bon tradition to convey complete groups of deities and mountains, as well as cosmological principles. Pho-bo dbang-phyug's maternal grandfather Pha-lha was a spirit-medium of special distinction for the mountain deity Gangs-ri Lha-btsan. He is said to have once disappeared under the waters of Ma-pham g.yu-mtsho during the course of a performance. Pho-bo dbang-phyug reports that it was from his grandfather that he received much of his training and spiritual guidance. Pha-lha died when Pho-bo dbang-phyug was about 21 years of age and away in the Mount rTa-rgo locale. He disclosed to me that he earned his keep there by performing for local families, both Bon-po and Buddhist. Unfortunately, the long family lineage of spirit-mediums may come to an end with Pho-bo dbang-phyug; his son has not been initiated into the profession.

In a Buddhist myth of origin it was Gu-ru Rin-po-che who invited spirit-mediums from the four cardinal directions, the Phyogs-bzhi dpa' rabs, to come and practice in Tibet so that they could alleviate the suffering of the people. According to the etiologic myth handed down to Pho-bo dbang-phyug from his grandfather, in very ancient times there were four *bla-chen* (great lamas), four *rgyal-chen* (great kings) and four *dpa' chen* (great spirit-mediums) in Tibet).[20] The names and residences of the original dPa' chen bzhi are said to be as follows: 1) east—gZigs-dkar (White Vision) dpa' bo, who resided in the place of crystal, called Brag phug shel-dkar phug;[21] 2) south—A-chen[22] dpa'

[19] Berglie (1976: 88) reports that he is the ninth in a lineage of *lha-pa*.

[20] This myth illustrates the importance of the *lha-pa*, who sat along side great lamas and kings, and seems to reflect the early religious and political nexus that existed between royalty and Bon priests, the *gshen-po* and *dpon-gsas*. For example, in the Bon cosmological text *Srid pa'i mdzod phug* (Varanasi, 1993, pp. 23, 24) we read that at a convocation held by Tibet's eighth king Gri-gum btsan-po: "The *gshen* stayed in the rows on the right and the ministers on carpets in the left rows. The *btsan-po* (king) stayed in the very center. The commoners obediently sat below."

[21] Among the most famous places named Shel-dkar phug (Crystal Cave) in Upper Tibet is the cave situated on the southern flanks of gNyan-chen Thang-lha. According to bsTan-grag lha-pa, Gu-ru Rin-po-che subdued the deity of the mountain at this location.

[22] According to residents of Dang-ra g.yu-mtsho, A-chen, at least when prefixed

bo, who resided in the place of banded agate, called Lha-rong smug-po;[23] 3) west—Khro-rgyal (Wrathful King) dpa' bo, who resided in the place of copper, called rDzong-ngar dmar-po (Red Strength Castle); and 4) north—Nag-mthing (Dark Blue) dpa' bo, who resided in the place of iron, called rDzong-sngags nag-po (Black Incantations Castle).

Pho-bo dbang-phyug states that he was around ten years old when the gods first appeared before him.[24] However, he did not become an initiated *lha-pa* until thirteen years of age during a visit to Mount Gangs rin-po-che. At that time he received *dbang lung khrid gsum* (empowerments, transmissions and instructions) from the reincarnate lama rMa-sprul rin-po-che. He asserts that first he learned that devotion to Buddhism and the lamas were essential to his practice, as well as the importance of bodily cleanliness. To this day, Pho-bo dbang-phyug refrains from eating garlic and chilies, and he does not drink alcoholic beverages. He adds that he does not eat meat when he is to perform. His pure life style has obviously helped him because he has remained in excellent mental and physical condition through the years, although he now complains of heart troubles.

Pho-bo dbang-phyug's initiation with rMa-sprul rin-po-che is said to have lasted nine or ten days, and was a difficult, even dangerous process. To protect him from harm and to test his ability, a piece of red cloth was tied around the right ring finger and a white cloth around his left ring finger (sometimes the order of the cloths were reversed). These ties functioned to block the *rtsa* (subtle channels) leading from the ring fingers, and to prevent uninvited deities from entering his body. With his fingers thus bound, the lama would ask Pho-bo dbang-phyug what he saw in the *me-long*. His first vision was of *sa-bdag* (sovereign of the earth spirits), in the form of white men on white horses, who were part of gNyan-chen thang-lha's circle of deities. The significance of these visions was interpreted by rMa-sprul rin-po-che. The lama also taught him which pacific or wrathful forms of the mountain gods should be applied for curing specific

to the name of a local sacred formation called sGo-po (mGon-po) rnam-gsum, comes from the Zhang-zhung language (Bellezza 2001: 123).

[23] Purple Divine Valley. This is the name of a sacred mountain found at bKra-ri gnam-mtsho (Bellezza 2001: 229), but it is not at all certain if the residence of A-chen dpa' bo denotes the same place.

[24] Also see account in Berglie 1976, pp. 88, 89; 1978, pp. 41, 42.

disorders. At one interval in the initiation rMa-sprul rin-po-che would welcome various deities into Pho-bo dbang-phyug's *me-long* and ask him to identify them. This was a difficult period that lasted for five or six days, and his body would shake uncontrollably. The next stage of the initiation was when rMa-sprul rin-po-che removed the strings from his hands, causing a violent visceral reaction. It took several days for this reaction to subside, and for his subtle channels to be fully opened.

Now that Pho-bo dbang-phyug had become a fit vehicle for the deities, rMa-sprul rin-po-che focused on the method of practice. He learned that during the invocation he had to fully concentrate on the deities, and at least three libations (water, tea and milk) and incense had to be offered. Pho-bo dbang-phyug notes that some spirit-mediums offer meat, but he was taught not to. These offerings are designed to welcome the gods to the place of practice. As he concentrates on the deities powerful looking men appear in his field of vision. These are the demonic *the'u-rang, 'dre* and *gnod-pa*.[25] Pho-bo dbang-phyug learned that he must ignore these apparitions. This vision of powerful men is followed by one of weak-looking men. However, the powerful men transmogrify into weak men, and the weak men turn into powerful, resplendent figures of much beauty. These latter figures are thought to be the gods. Very soon thereafter the gods appear in the *me-long*, the last phase of the ritual before Pho-bo dbang-phyug's consciousness is displaced and the gods actually possess him. At this instant, he claims to loose his normal sense of recollection and perception.

Pho-bo dbang-phyug learned that pilgrimage is essential for a spirit-medium. He visited rTa-rgo and Gangs rin-po-che on several occasions, and gNyan-chen thang-lha once. According to him, the most important holy mountain is Gangs rin-po-che, followed by gNyan-chen thang-lha and then rTa-rgo. He declares that these places are especially efficacious for practice, as they are the abodes of the mountain gods who form the basis of spirit-mediumship. While at Gangs rin-po-che, he practiced at a house-sized rock formation called Gangs-ri lha-btsan pho-brang, situated on the west side of the holy mountain. Male pilgrims can only enter this place in a most

[25] Probably refers to the *gnod-sbyin* class of demons and deities. For numerous examples see Tucci 1949, pp. 718–720; Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956.

respectful manner lest the wrath of the local protector Gangs-ri lha-btsan be unleashed upon them. Pho-bo dbang-phyug states that women are not permitted to approach this shrine. He adds that the local mountain guardian Gangs-ri lha-btsan has flaming red hair. Pho-bo dbang-phyug also practiced at cemeteries to learn how to control the ghosts and demons that appeared before him. At rTa-rgo, he practiced at rBa-rong la located on the south end of the *skor-ba* (circuit) around the holy mountain range. On this pass there is supposed to be a cliff that sounds like a drum and the beating of cymbals.

At rTa-rgo there are two places specially singled out by the Pho-bo dbang-phyug for initiation and practice, Shod-tram phug and rDzu 'phrul phug, located on the eastern flanks of the mountain Ngo-dmar lha-btsan.[26] Shod-tram phug is also popularly called Sho khram phug, after the *sho* (dice) of rTa-rgo and *rang-byon* (self-formed) writing resembling *khram-shing* (boards with magical markings) (Bellezza 1997: 403). According to Pho-bo dbang-phyug, Sho khram phug was used by the Vajrayana adept Gu-ru Rin-po-che (cf. Berglie 1976: 92; 1980: 39, 40) Pho-bo dbang-phyug tells the following story concerning the name of the cave: in ancient times, dice players used to come to Sho khram phug in order to capture the *the'u-rang* demon that lived there. They would grab its hairy arm and threaten to kill him unless he cooperated with the players. The dice players demanded that he help them win the game by guiding the hand that had caught the *the'u-rang* when throwing the dice.

Pho-bo dbang-phyug explains that inside Sho khram phug there was a self-formed stone *bsang-khang* (incense burner), table and bench, which were used by the spirit-mediums while testing their abilities

[26] Shod-tram phug is a cave associated with the great Bon *rdzogs-chen-pa* dMu shod-tram chen who lived prior to the 11th century (Bellezza 1997: 403). His tenure in the nearby valley of Nyi-ma lung is documented in the *Zhang zhung snyan rgyud bla ma'i rnam thar* by sPa-ston bstan-rgyal bzang-po (14th century) (Delhi edition, nos. 34, 35). I explored this cave on the Upper Tibet Antiquities Expedition, during the course of an archaeological survey, in June 2001. Shod-tram phug (elevation 5350m) is a small cave created from a cavity underneath a large flat boulder. Stonewalls and a stone façade prop up the roof, and outer walls have been built around the boulder. The random-rubble, dry-mortar walls covered in orange lichen appear to have stood for a long time as attested by local residents. Affixed to the smoke-blackened roof of the cave are the usual offerings left by pilgrims: dabs of butter, tufts of white wool, paper *rlung-rta* (prayer flags) and old *srung-mdud* (protection cords blessed by lamas). Inside the cave there is a single small stone platform.

(cf. *ibid.*: 92). An inferior spirit-medium would be asphyxiated by a powerful wind that entered his mouth. His remains would be found outside the cave and his ritual equipment inside tied to a string (*ibid.*: 92). A mediocre spirit-medium would emerge dazed from the cave, having been beaten because of his inability to clearly distinguish between the gods and demons. While in the cave, the superior spirit-medium saw three kinds of self-formed writing treasures orchestrated by Gu-ru Rin-po-che: 1) *dpa'-bo gter yig*—relates the complete history of the spirit-mediums; 2) *mkha' 'gro gter-yig*—tells the complete history of the *mkha' 'gro-ma*, sky-treading female deities who help the *lha-pa*);[27] and 3) *dmyal-khams bcu-brgyad gter-yig*—tells the complete history of the eighteen hell realms. By his own admission, Pho-bo dbang-phyug belongs to the superior grade of *lha-pa*. For this caliber of spirit-medium, Sho khram phug is a romping ground where they revel in their abilities.

Pho-bo dbang-phyug notes that the other cave in the rTa-rgo region visited by spirit-mediums on pilgrimage is rDzul 'phrul phug (Cave of Miracles). Like Shod-tram phug, it is found on the flanks of Ngo-dmar lha-btsan.[28]

The *me-long*, the copper alloy mirror used to host the deities of the trance, is called the *gling* by Pho-bo dbang-phyug and other *lha-pa* because it functions as a model or symbol of all existence. Essentially, it represents a microcosm of the universe. When one *me-long* is employed in the *lha-bzhugs* (séance) it is divided into three concentric bands (*gling-gsum*). These three zones are the discrete territories

[27] The *mkha' 'gro* represent various types of female divinities, however, the variety associated with the *lha-pa* of Upper Tibet are pacific deities who serve as benefactresses of the trance ceremony.

[28] I also explored this site on the Upper Tibet Antiquities Expedition, in June 2001. rDzu 'phrul phug is not a natural cave but a manmade chamber built underneath a large boulder, which is part of the ruins of an extensive Bon temple complex constructed prior to the nearby Bon monastery of Se-zhig. It is probably so named because in a popular folktale its roof is believed to have been magically constructed by the circa 14th century adept Nam-mkha' blo-ldan. According to the senior-most Bon scholar Lopon Tenzin Namdak, who spent two and a half years in the region, most ruins in the vicinity of rDzu 'phrul phug were probably founded in the Tibetan Imperial period (617–841) by an individual named 'Dzi-bon dbang-grub. The chamber (elevation 5100 m) constituted a rear shrine room in the main temple compound of rDzu 'phrul phug. Five steps lead down to the four-meter long subterranean chamber. On the ceiling are attached the same kind of offerings found at Shod-tram phug. On the west wall of the cave is an altar constructed of stone and mud featuring a large central recess.

of the three types of deities presiding over the *srid-pa-gsum*, the vertically oriented three planes of existence. Pho-bo dbang-phyug calls the outer ring of the *me-long*, *tshe-ring padma 'dab-brgyad* (long life eight-petal lotus). It is also known as the *phyi-gling* (outer world), and represents the *lha-yul* (realm of the gods), particularly those who rule the séance. The middle band, called the *nang-gling* (inner world), represents the *klu-yul* (realm of the subterranean water spirits). According to Pho-bo dbang-phyug, it is where the *klu pho-nya* (water serpent attendants) converge. The center of the *me-long* represents the *bar-gling* (middle world) and is where the possessing *btsan* and their many *pho-nya* (attendants) converge. Pho-bo dbang-phyug usually uses three antique *me-long*, each symbolizing one realm of the *srid-pa-gsum*. The *bar-gling* is the smallest of the three. He reports that at least one of the *me-long* he owns was donated to him by a Buddhist lama.

Pho-bo dbang-phyug believes that during the performance, at the moment of possession, his *rnam-shes* (consciousness) is transferred to the *phyi-gling*. While it remains in the mirror it is protected by Guru rin-po-che.[29] At that very moment of transference, the *'od-zer* (radiant light embodying the consciousness) of the possessing deity is envisioned as striking the *me-long*. As Pho-bo dbang-phyug lives in central Nepal the *'od-zer* of the deity must instantaneously travel hundreds of kilometers from its mountain abode in Tibet. Then, in very rapid succession, the *rnam-shes* of the deity is reflected from the *me-long* into Pho-bo dbang-phyug. He describes the *rnam-shes* of the deities as having the appearance of light rays. Pho-bo dbang-phyug thinks that his *rnam-shes* departs and re-enters his body at the end of the trance via the *dbu-ma* (central subtle channel), the opening of which is in the fontanel. The possessing deities are said to enter and exit via the *rtsa* known as *rkyang-ma* and *ro-ma* (collateral subtle channels), which begin in the ring fingertips.[30] According to Pho-bo dbang-phyug, during spirit-possession the deities reside in the central and two collateral channels. Deities called *rtsa-bdag* watch over the openings and maintain the integrity of these channels.

[29] Gu-ru rin-po-che/Slob-dpon padma 'byung-gnas/Padmasambhava was the Eighth century Vajrayana miracle worker popularly worshipped by Tibetan Buddhists. His exploits subduing demons and propagating the Thunderbolt school of Buddhism in Tibet are recorded in the *Padma'i bka' thang*, among other works. For an English translation of the *Padma'i bka' thang* see Terchen Urgyan Lingpa 1978.

[30] Berglie (1976: 99, 100) provides an excellent description of the *rtsa* and their function.

Pho-bo dbang-phyug explains that during the healing of his clients the contamination-causing illness can be transferred to him and that this must be removed from his body by drinking three types of *tshan* (lustral water). He says that it is the possessing deity who makes him drink this ablutionary water, which originates from snow mountains, slate mountains and clay mountains. Pho-bo dbang-phyug describes the cleansing of the outside and inside of his subtle channels with the phrase "*rtsa phyi dkar nang dkar grib kyi bsil.*" There is also a group of deities, 'cleaners of the *rtsa* road', involved in this purification process (Berglie 1976: 100).

Pho-bo dbang-phyug relates that when he lived in Tibet he would go into trance to prevent hail and lightning strikes, which could kill or injure livestock and cause great economic loss. He believes that dragons cause these natural phenomena, but that gNyan-chen thang-lha has the power to challenge and control them. Predicting the future, especially as pertains to the success of a business venture or long trip made by a benefactor, is said to be traditionally another cause for engaging in a séance.[31]

Pho-bo dbang-phyug makes clear that the main purpose of invoking the gods and permitting them to take temporary residence in one's body is to cure physical and mental disease. He calls the arrival of the gods 'descent of the deities' (*lha 'bab-pa*). For Pho-bo dbang-phyug the mountain spirit whom he calls gNyan-chen thang-lha dkar-po (Great gNyan White God of the Plain) is the supreme deity of the trance ceremony. In prayers at the start of séance the rTa-rgo deities are invoked first, generally so that they can arrange the arrival of gNyan-chen thang-lha. So dominant is gNyan-chen thang-lha that Pho-bo dbang-phyug considers the great mountain gods Nam-ra (chief *yul-lha* of Bar-tha) and sPom-ra (chief *yul-lha* of A-mdo)[32] subservient to him. He also observes that there is an inauspicious group of rTa-rgo spirits called rTa-rgo bshan-pa spun bdun (Seven rTa-rgo Butcher Brothers) that can create disturbances for people and spirit-mediums (cf. Berglie 1980: 41). The mountain god Nam-ra also has a special relationship with Pho-bo dbang-phyug because it is his *phugs-lha* (family's protective spirit), and helps to serve and defend him during the trance ceremony.

[31] For further information on prognostication see Berglie 1976, pp. 98, 99.

[32] For Bon pilgrimage lore about this important holy mountain see Buffetrille 1994, also Part Three, section i, p. 191 (fn. 69), Part Five, section viii, pp. 469–471.

Pho-bo dbang-phyug avers that he carries out his mediumistic activities with the help and blessings of Gu-ru rin-po-che, Sangs-rgyas bcom-ldan (Buddha), 'Od-dpag-med (Buddha of Boundless Light) and sPyan-ras-gzigs (*bodhisattva* of Compassion). They serve as divine patrons and protectors of the ceremony. However, the actual possession is overseen and regulated by the chief *lha-ri* (mountain gods) gNyan-chen thang-lha and rTa-rgo dge-rgan. Pho-bo dbang-phyug says that in the entourage of these gods are a large number of subsidiary deities, including the ones that possess spirit-mediums. He equates these officiating mountain deities with doctors and their possessing manifestations with advisors; all can help people through spirit-mediumship. Nevertheless, he cautions that if provoked or angered they can cut short a transgressor's life-span.

Pho-bo dbang-phyug maintains that during the trance ceremony the possessing deities can search for the lost *bla* (soul) of a client and retrieve it.[33] A person suffering from a wandering soul is listless and unresponsive, and in extreme cases catatonic. Pho-bo dbang-phyug, asseverates that loss of the soul is extremely serious for it can lead to the death of the client in a relatively short period of time. According to him however, a more common cause of illness is *grib* (contamination).[34] While under the influence of the possessing deity, Pho-bo dbang-phyug will often examine the pulse of the client and determines if a *grib* is the afflicting agent. Various *grib* are thought to assume different guises and can appear as dark-colored worms or as a mass of scum. The possessing deity then calls on an ancillary figure or spirit helper—frequently in the shape of an animal—who is a remedial deity expert in removing the particular contamination that has caused the disease.[35] Pho-bo dbang-phyug comments that the

[33] Berglie (1976: 99; 1978: 46) supplies an account of Pho-bo dbang-phyug and other spirit-mediums at Hyangja retrieving an errant soul. There are various rituals in Bon and Buddhism for retrieval of the soul (*bla-bslu*) through ransom offerings (*bla-glud*) that do not depend on spirit-mediumship. An analysis of this common ritual theme is found in Karmay 1998, pp. 310–339. The text *Srid rgyud* relates a precedent for the *bla-bslu* ritual involving the healing of the first Tibetan king gNya' khri btsan-po by Bon priests who repurchased his soul (Karmay 1998: 324–326).

[34] Also defined as impurity, defilement or pollutant. For an edifying discussion on *grib* and *gdon* (demonic influences commonly causing diseases) see Tucci 1980, pp. 173, 175, 176, 201, 202.

[35] The animal forms of the spirit-mediums' remedial spirits also find a prominent role in the Ge-sar epic where they are also attributed with great powers. For example, among three of the greatest of the 30 dPa' rtul, allies related paternally and maternally to Ge-sar, are the Khra-glag-spyang gsum (The Three, Hawk, Eagle and Wolf). They include 'Dan-ma byang-khra who is as clever as a hawk, which knows its language without instruction; sGa-bde glag-rgod who is as devastatingly decisive as an eagle pouncing on its prey; and dPa' la mi-spyang dkar-po who is as ravenous a consumer of the enemy in battle as a wolf in a flock of sheep.

remedial deities usually remove *grib* by having him suck it out of the client's body. In one séance he accomplished this by using his drum (Berglie 1976: 97, 98).[36]

Pho-bo dbang-phyug states that during the descent of the deities it is primarily different zoomorphic emanations of the mountain god gNyan-chen thang-lha (under the direction of his son Thang-sras mchor-po, the possessing deity), which cure a range of diseases caused by various *grib*. These deities belong to gNyan-chen thang-lha's *lha 'khor* (circle of deities) that conventionally numbers 360. One of his remedial deities is Thang-lha'i khyi-rgod rag-pa (Thang-lha's Russet-Colored Wild Dog) said to be especially efficacious in cases of mad dog bite. When Pho-bo dbang-phyug is possessed by this spirit he behaves in the fashion of a fierce dog. In Berglie's study (1976: 97, 98, 101), a vivid description of Pho-bo dbang-phyug while being possessed by this deity is given. According to Pho-bo dbang-phyug, Khyi-rgod rag-pa is actually in the form of a wolf leashed to an iron chain eighteen *'dom* (spans) in length by his keeper, a deity named Khyi-rdzi brag-btsan mchor-po (Handsome Rock bTsan Dog Keeper). When his services are not needed this spirit canine is kept tied to a stone found near Mount gNyan-chen thang-lha, which is as tall as an eight year-old child. Khyi-rgod rag-pa has a collar of white conch, a halter of *gzi*[37] and flames issue from the middle of his back. Other remedial zoomorphic deities under the control of gNyan-chen thang-lha are Dred-nag sog-dkar (Black Bear with White Front Quarters) and 'Jibs-rogs 'ug-pa mchu-ring (Sucking Helper Long Beak Owl).[38] It is important to note that these are common ancillary spirits among the spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet and can appear in the retinues of different mountain deities. According to Pho-bo dbang-phyug, another set of remedial deities in the retinue of gNyan-chen thang-lha is the

[36] An account of Pho-bo dbang-phyug sucking out *grib* is found in Berglie 1978, pp. 45, 46.

[37] *gZi* are specially processed agates with stripes and eyes (*mig*) forming various patterns. These ancient stones are highly valued by Tibetans. For further information see Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, pp. 505–507; Ebbinghouse and Winsten 1988; Allen 2002.

[38] It is reported that 'Jibs-rogs 'ug-pa (variously 'ug-gu) mchu-ring cures conditions such as fainting and vertigo (Berglie 1980: 42).

gNam gyi khyung-chen sder-lnga (Five-Clawed Great Khyung of the Sky), which has black, red and white forms depending on the kind of *grib* afflicting the client.

Pho-bo dbang-phyug says that under the leadership of rTa-rgo dge-rgan mchor-po, the possessing deities of the trance rTa-rgo ngo-dmar mtshal-mig (Red Face Vermilion Eye rTa-rgo) and rTa-rgo dpal-mo zur-ra[39] depute the remedial deities Dred-nag sog-dkar and Zangs-spyang dmar-po (Red Copper Wolf).[40] At the conclusion of the trance ceremony it is common for observers to search for the teeth, claw and beak marks of the helping deities on the body of the patient (Berglie 1980: 42). In diseases attributed to the *klu* (various skin and contagious ailments),[41] the possessing deities can signal the king of the *klu*, Klu-chen gtsug-na rin-chen. He is said to work through members of his host of *klu* spirits who reside in the *nang-gling* during the trance. His main helper is a *klu-mo* named gSer phyug-mo (Gold Riches Female).

Pho-bo dbang-phyug states that in certain circumstances, the chief mountain gods can summon their consorts gNam-mtsho phyug-mo and Dang-ra las kyi dbang-mo, along with their respective circles of deities, to participate in the cure of the client. He notes that although members of their entourage might, the lake goddesses themselves never possess him. As per Buddhist convention, Pho-bo dbang-phyug considers these goddesses subordinate to their male partners. He describes gNam mtsho phyug-mo as dressed in sky-like attire and sitting on the great carpet of the land.

A quincunx of female deities known as mKha' 'gro sde-lnga are invoked by Pho-bo dbang-phyug as he puts on his *rigs-lnga* headdress. These deities serve as his protectresses and maintain the *rigs-lnga* on top of his head during the trance, thus preventing misfortune from visiting him. The mKha' 'gro sde-lnga can retrieve the wandering *bla* (soul) of a client ('Od-dpag-med is also said to play a role in recovering souls). This quincunx of deities occupies the four cardinal directions and the overhead position. Each one has a horse mount and is accompanied by a dog and *lha-bya* (divine bird). The specific activities carried out by the dogs and *lha-bya* are unclear to Pho-bo dbang-phyug. The mKha' 'gro sde-lnga correspond with the *'phrin-las* scheme (tantric modalities relating to the activities of deities and the manner in which they are propitiated by devotees). These deities, and their mounts and retinue, have the characteristic colors of the *'phrin-las* plan. They are enumerated by Pho-bo dbang-phyug as follows: 1) east (white)—mKha' 'gro dkar-mo; 2) south (gold)—mKha' 'gro gser-mo; 3) west (red)—mKha' 'gro dmar-mo; 4) north (blue)—mKha' 'gro sngon-mo; 5) overhead (dark blue)—mKha' 'gro rnam-par snang-mdzad mthing-nag. It appears that the name of this latter figure is derived from Bai-ro-tsa-na, the chief Buddha of the rGyal-ba rigs-lnga.

I had the good fortune of observing Pho-bo dbang-phyug perform on November 30, 1998. It was decided that he would go into trance to predict the outcome of my upcoming 1999 Changthang Circuit Expedition (see Bellezza 2001). At 5:30 AM, with the very first light of the new day, Pho-bo dbang-phyug's son came to fetch me from the Hyangja guest-house. I arrived at his house to see that the special altar for the séance had already been set up on a small table next to his bed. This same table, when not being used for such a purpose, is where Pho-bo dbang-phyug carries out many of his household chores. His permanent altar is adjacent to this small table and is where he conducts his Buddhist practice; he had already finished his daily prayers by the time I had arrived. Much care is taken in preparing the altar as this is where the possessing deities and their spirit-helpers alight. First, rice kernels in the form of a *g.yung-drung* (swastika) are poured on top of the table (the *g.yung-drung* is an auspicious symbol decorating altars in this fashion since ancient times). For added measure, more grains of rice were scattered on top of the *g.yung-drung*. Pho-bo dbang-phyug explains that this rice constitutes one of the offerings to the deities. During the trance ceremony, as in invocatory texts, much stress is placed on the generosity of the officiant as a prerequisite to receiving the deity's assistance. Great things are expected of the deities thus they must be rewarded handsomely. Much of the table was also covered in white *kha-btags* (offering scarves).

[39] Probably Khri-mun lha-btsan zur-ra rje, one of the deities of the rTa-rgo brotherhood mentioned in the relevant *gsol-kha* texts, is intended here.

[40] According to Berglie's study, Dred-nag sog-po assists in the cure of diseases caused by the *klu* and *sa-bdag*, and Zangs-spyang dmar-po (with a copper collar) helps to cure possession by the *btsan*. Dred-nag sog-dkar rips diseases out of the patient with his claws. See Berglie 1980, p. 42. It is reported that the four spirit-mediums of Hyangja had about 20 of these zoomorphic remedial deities (Berglie 1976: 98).

[41] For a general assessment of the *klu* see Tucci 1949, pp. 711–713; Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956.

On the right side of the table several tiers of photographs of lamas and high deities were erected, firmly signaling that the ceremony is conducted under the legitimizing auspices of Buddhism. The images included those of His Holiness the Dalai Lama, 16th rGyal-ba karma-pa, Jo-bo rin-po-che (patron Buddha of Tibet), Tshe dpag-med (Long Life Buddha), sPyan-ras-gzigs (*bodhisattva* of compassion), dPal-ldan lha-mo (chief Buddhist protectress), dGra-lha dkar-po (chief Buddhist *dgra-lha* protector) and gNyan-chen thang-lha. Next to the photographs was a statue of one of the fierce manifestations of the Gu-ru mtshan-brgyad (eight forms of Gu-ru rin-po-che), who subdued the mountain deities of the trance and brought them into the fold of Buddhism. Other objects placed on the altar included incense sticks, *mar-me* (butter lamp), a butter lamp full of milk (offering for *klu*), two small vessels of tea (one for the mountain gods and other protectors, and one for the *mkha' 'gro-ma*), a vessel of water and a spoon (sometimes used during the trance for lustration), *rdo-rje* (ritual thunderbolt), *dung-dkar* (conch shell for invoking deities), and a small brass figure of a *khyung* (native horned eagle deity of Upper Tibet). Pho-bo dbang-phyug relates that this last item is used in healing rituals associated with diseases caused by the *klu*. He adds that Gu-ru rin-po-che subdued the *klu* at bSam-yas with the help of the *khyung*. Another object on the altar was a 30 centimeter-long horn made from a wild Indian ungulate, which is used to welcome the possessing deities.[42] Pho-bo dbang-phyug says that in Tibet a *rkang-gling* (human thighbone trumpet) was used instead but that the animal horn works well enough. Another implement from the Indian Subcontinent was a string of *rudraksha* beads, which are sometimes used in healing rituals to strike clients.

At the head of his bed the *rigs-lnga* and *mda' dar* (arrow festooned with colored ribbons) were laid out. Pho-bo dbang-phyug observes that this latter object is used to increase the *phywa-g.yang* (good fortune potential) of the client, as well as representing the *rten* (support vehicle) of his family protector, Nam-ra. On this occasion, Pho-bo dbang-phyug used a *rigs-lnga* with mystic syllables of the *mkha' 'gro-ma* painted on its five diadems. He also has a *rigs-lnga* with the rGyal-ba rigs-lnga (Cosmic Directional Buddhas) ornamenting each of its

[42] Horns made from the Indian plains antelope are used by the Tamang *bombo* (Holmberg 1989: 158, 159).

five diadems, which he uses in some séances. Attached to the sides of the *rigs-lnga* are fan-shaped, rainbow-colored *gshog-pa* (wings), which symbolize the link between him and his possessing deities. According to the *lha-pa*, the eye-like designs on them represent the eyes of the *khyung* (cf. Berglie 1976: 95). Hanging from the wings are the *snyan-dar*, ribbons of five colors. A *kha-ṭam rtse-gsum* (trident) also stood in the corner near the head of Pho-bo dbang-phyug's bed. Tridents are often found on *lha-gtsug*, shrines for mountain gods and other protective deities in Tibet, as well as being used by cis-Himalayan spirit-mediums. According to Pho-bo dbang-phyug, other objects sometimes used in the ceremony, but which were not displayed on this occasion, include a conch with colored ribbons attached (apparently used in curative rituals in which the *klu* play a part), *phur-pa* (ritual dagger used to exorcise demons), bundle of *thang-dkar* (lammergeyer) feathers used in curative procedures),[43] and the *mi-pags g.yang-gzhi*. This latter object is a small human figure made of leather, with black stone eyes and bird claw hands and feet, which is used in healing rituals (Berglie 1976: 95, 97).

Among the photographs of gods and lamas, the three *me-long* of the trance were arrayed in a hierarchical fashion in terms of the importance of the deities to the ceremony and their placement in the *srid-pa-gsum* cosmos. The upper *phyi-gling* (outer world) is for gNyan-chen thang-lha, the supreme deity officiating over the ceremony. The small central *me-long* is the *bar-gling* (middle world) in which the possessing deities reside, as well as the protector Dam-can mgar-ba nag-po, who is another guardian of the ceremony. The lower *me-long*, the *nang-gling* (inner world), is for the host of *klu*.

Soon after I arrived at his house, Pho-bo dbang-phyug began the invocations to the deities of the trance, which he recited by heart. While doing so, he rung his *gshang* (flat bell) in his left hand and banged his *ḍa-ma-ru* (hourglass-shaped hand drum) with his right. In Tibet he had also used the *rnga-chen* (big drum beaten with a S-shaped drumstick) (cf. Berglie 1976: 94). There was also a small interval during the recitation when he switched from the *gshang* to the *rdo-rje*. The invocation lasted about fifteen minutes and at the end Pho-bo dbang-phyug kindly paused to explain which deities had been invoked. This was the standard pantheon of deities involved in

[43] For reference to these feathers see Berglie 1976, pp. 94, 95.

his trance ceremonies, and includes: white (*lha*) and red (*btsan*) forms of rTa-rgo, their consort Dang-ra las kyi dbang-mo, Dang-chung g.yu yi zur-phud can,[44] mKha' 'gro shes-rabs brgyad-bcu (80 wisdom lineage *mkha' 'gro* in Lake Dang-ra's circle), gNyan-chen thang-lha dkar-po and his consort gNam mtsho phyug-mo, Thang-lha lha'i-g.yag dkar-po,[45] Gangs ti-se and Ma-pham g.yu mtsho, sPom-ra, Jo-mo gangs-dkar,[46] Shel-gangs-lcam,[47] A-phyi/A-ce lha-mo (Grandmother/Elder Sister Goddess), Lha-phyi tshe-ring mched-lnga,[48] Lha-phyi thab-mdung dkar-mo (White Divine Grandmother Hearth Spear), Lha-mo 'od-zer chen-mo,[49] and Ekajati.[50] Pho-bo dbang-phyug points out that all of these deities are geographically based in mountains or lakes. It is also clear that the majority of them are endemic to Upper Tibet. While the female deities do not usually

[44] This is one of the four main sister goddesses in Dang-ra's entourage. For text-based descriptions see Bellezza 1997, pp. 342–344; 2001, p. 83.

[45] Thang-lha's Divine White Yak. A well-known yak deity in the circle of gNyan-chen thang-lha. See Bellezza 1997, p. 47.

[46] Elder Sister White Mountain. This is a famed mountain goddess who resides in the gNyan-chen thang-lha range, on the border between Yangs-pa-can and sGar-sde. See Bellezza 1997, pp. 56, 108, 128, 234, 235.

[47] Shel-gangs-lcam/Zhal-gangs 'jam/Shar-gangs-can/sMan-btsun gangs 'jam lha-mo is the well-known mountain goddess located in 'Brong-pa byang-ma (situated at the tri-juncture of Nyi-ma, mTsho-chen and sGer-rtse counties). She is said by the Bon-po to be the offspring of rTa-rgo and Dang-ra, and her abode is a 6800-meter tall glaciated mountain. Refer to Bellezza 1997, p. 312. Evidently, the only propitiatory text for this goddess is the one composed by a certain Gangs-sprul bla-ma entitled *sMan btsun mched lnga'i gsol mchod*. It is found in the book (no author or publisher is given) entitled *sTod mnga' ris sger rtse rdzong 'brong pa byang ma'i lo rgyus* (pp. 94 to 96). It is written in this work that local residents report that an earlier text once existed for the goddess (p. 93). The book goes on to say that when Gangs-sprul bla-ma stayed in bDe-chen phug, in 1956, he encouraged local people to make offerings to the goddess in order to obtain good results. He also warned them against killing wild animals and defiling the hearth or burning foul things at her mountain, lest they be stricken with infectious diseases and livestock epidemics. According to her *gsol-mchod* text, sMan-btsun gangs 'jam lha-mo has a resplendent white body and five *thor-tshugs* (hair buns or a type of head ornament). In her right hand she holds the *mda' dar* of life and in her left, the *nor-bum* (vase of wealth) at her chest. Her feet are ornamented with a snake and peacock.

[48] These are the renowned long-life goddesses whose main abode is near the Tibetan border, in the vicinity of Jo-mo glang-ma (Mount Everest). For further information see Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, pp. 177–181.

[49] Great Radiant Goddess. In this context, the goddess who resides in a glacial tarn called Lha-mo mtsho-dar (Frozen Lake Goddess) is intended. The tarn is located on the northern foot of gNyan-chen thang-lha. See Bellezza 1997, pp. 55, 87.

[50] In this context, a *bstan-ma/brtan-ma* goddess whose residence is Bal-yul gser-phug is indicated. See Nebesky-Wojkowitz, pp. 185, 186.

possess the *lha-pa* they have an integral role in the ceremony as protectresses and benefactresses. Pho-bo dbang-phyug adds that the invoked deities that do not enter him often serve as attendants for the ones who do. During the invocation, his son, who acts as his assistant, takes grains of rice and sprinkles them in the four directions, beginning in the east, as offerings to the deities.

Once the deities were invoked through the sounds of the musical instruments, and the offerings of incense and grain, Pho-bo dbang-phyug prepared for the trance. He put on a brocade apron and above it a brocade mantle. Some brocades were presented to him by His Holiness the Dalai Lama, who has watched him perform. He also suspended a brass *lo 'khor bcu-gnyis* (calendar wheel) around his neck, worn as a kind of amulet. He then tied a *kha-btags* (scarf) around his head, unfurled the wings of his *rigs-lnga* and donned the headdress, tying it to his head. Pho-bo dbang-phyug resumed playing the *gshang* and *ḍa-ma-ru*, but a few moments later he put down the *gshang* and picked up the *mda' dar*, which he placed under his right armpit, the residence of the male protective spirit, *pho-lha*. He then picked up the *rdo-rje* with his left hand, and a pinch of grain that he put into one of the vessels of tea. This was followed by throwing pinches of grain into the air three times and the blowing of his conch. He subsequently took the *mda' dar* from his armpit and rotated it in the air before setting it down. Pho-bo dbang-phyug then vigorously played his *gshang* and *ḍa-ma-ru* while invoking the deities of the trance. Suddenly, as if greatly agitated, he jumped straight up and then back down, to rest on his knees. His son threw grain on him, signaling that the deity had arrived (apparently Thang-sras mchor-po).[51] He continued with his invocation but his voice was differently modulated, and his face tense and at times contorted.

Acting as an intermediary, his son then petitioned the *lha-pa* on my behalf. In response, Pho-bo dbang-phyug placed rice kernels on his *ḍa-ma-ru*, and with *gshang* and *rdo-rje* in his right hand, called out to the helping spirits. Then, orchestrated by the deity, with one quick sweep of the hand all the rice was cleared away from the *ḍa-ma-ru*

[51] Another well known spirit-medium for Thang-sras mchor-po was dBang 'dus of Ra-bang, in Ru-thog. He passed away in 1999, in his early 80s. Reportedly, he had been blessed by the Karma-pa who sanctioned his activities as a *lha-pa*. dBang 'dus is also said to have been a medium for the Rol-pa skya-bdun *btsan* brotherhood and a subsidiary form of the goddess dMag-zor rgyal-mo.

except for a single grain. This was a very good omen and Pho-bo dbang-phyug proclaimed that I would have an excellent journey to Tibet—so long as I remembered to make offerings of *rlung-rta* (prayer flags) and barleycorn to the indigenous deities. These utterances of the *lha-pa* were hard to understand and had to be translated into standard Tibetan by his son. In this specific divination, the face of the hand-drum was said to represent the universe, and the grains of rice all the possible fates of the individual.[52] After the drum divination another question was asked of the *lha-pa* before he began to beat two *ḍa-ma-ru* with outstretched arms. The son threw grain from the threshold of the house, apparently to those presiding over the divination. Pho-bo dbang-phyug soon returned to playing one *ḍa-ma-ru* with either the *gshang* or *rdo-rje* in his other hand. He played with his arms alternatively stretched upwards or outwards. All the while he was manipulating his instruments, the *lha-pa*'s head revolved round and round, and he recited invocations to the deities. Then, as quickly as the trance had begun, the *rigs-lnga* fell from Pho-bo dbang-phyug's head; this accompanied by the shuddering of his body, signaled that the deity had exited him. He had been in trance for no more than 20 minutes. Afterwards, he thanked the gods for having descended and said prayers to the Buddhist deities and gurus, meanwhile rotating his *mda' dar* and calling out for happiness and good fortune (*g.yang 'gugs*).[53]

He ended the ceremony with the Vajrasattva mantra of purification. Afterwards, he was visibly tired from his performance; it obviously requires a huge amount of energy to conduct. Nevertheless, the trance for divination and the attraction of good fortune is a sedate performance. In some spirit-possession ceremonies Pho-bo dbang-phyug dances and there is much noise and movement, but this one had been more subdued, in keeping with the solemn tone of the occasion.

[52] Berglie (1976: 98, 99) describes a more common form of *rnga-mo* (drum divination) practiced by the spirit-mediums of Hyangja. For an overview of this method of divination see Nebesky-Wojkowitz, pp. 457–460.

[53] The *mda' dar* is also used by some spirit-mediums and Tibetan physicians as a curative implement for sucking out diseases. For a description of this ritual see Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, pp. 367, 368.

iii) *dPa' dam, born circa 1914*

Interviewed in Shar-rtse and 'Gen-dbang villages, Nag-tshang, June 15 and 19, 1999.

dPa' dam is probably the best known *lha-pa* remaining in Nyi-ma county (western Nag-tshang). However, he reports that he has now retired from this work. dPa' dam is recognized as one of the leading cultural authorities of the region, and I was impressed by his vigor and clarity of mind. He hails from a hamlet called 'Gen-dbang, situated on the north shore of Ngang-rtse mtsho. He traces his *rus-rgyud* (clan lineage), called Hor Jing-gir/Byeng-ger, to the Mongol emperor Genghis Khan. His grandfather was also a *lha-pa*. On his mother's side he is related to the Nag-tshang *pho-pho*, the pre-Communist ruler of the region. His family's (*phugs-lha*) (protective spirit) is gNyan-chen thang-lha.

dPa' dam states that his work as a spirit-medium was conducted under the auspices of Gu-ru rin-po-che. His main possessing deity was rGya-dkar ljang-gyam, a prominent member of the *rgya-dkar* group of deities. According to dPa' dam, the *rgya-dkar/rgya-gar* are associated with the Ge-sar epic in the role of divine bards, and as generals and ministers. They have the same spiritual parentage as Ge-sar, their father being Tshang-pa dkar-po (Brahma) and their mother a daughter of gTsug-na rin-chen, the king of the *klu*.[54] The *rgya-dkar* deities subdue the *bdud* (class of spirits that can cause disease), and they remove *bgegs* (obstructions) and *gnod-pa* (harm) that cause illness. A major group of remedial deities that removed *grib* from dPa' dam's clients, was the rGya-dkar spyang-gdong spun-bdun (Seven Wolf-Headed rGya-dkar Brothers).[55]

Another deity that would possess dPa' dam during trance was Gangs-lung lha-btsan mchog-dkar rje (Mountain Country Lha-btsan Lord of the Bow), one of the seven brothers of the rTa-rgo range. dPa' dam calls this mountain deity the leader of all the *lha-btsan*

[54] In this context it is worth noting rGya-tsha zhal-dkar (Chinese/Mongolian Cousin White Visage), a white warrior figure and one of Ge-sar's primary allies. He was the half brother of Ge-sar, sharing the same earthly father Seng-blon gama. His earthly mother was rGya-bza' while Ge-sar's mother was 'Gog-bza'.

[55] Groupings of canine deities are also known in other religious contexts. For example, a group of eight she-wolf and eight bitch spirits of different precious substances are in the circle of the ancient Bon cosmogonic goddesses known as *dbal-mo* (Blezer 2000: 128, 129).

(ancestral and protective group of deities), and he is the dominator of the *klu*. A group of deities that counteracted diseases caused by the *klu* was the Klu-mo spun-bdun (Seven *Klu* Sisters). dPa' dam reports that another group of remedial deities was the lake serpents of Ma-pham g.yu-mtsho, called Ma-pham klu-mo spun-bdun. The remedial group known as the 55 Lag-la rtsis-yig 'bya-khri[56] (evidently an astrological group of deities) were instrumental in bringing rain. The group known to dPa' dam as rTsa-ba'i mi-rogs spun-bdun (Seven Brothers Helping Men of the Channels) protected and purified his subtle channels. A group of *btsan* deities that protected dPa' dam when he was in trance was the Rol-pa skya-bdun, which he describes as paramount *yul-lha* of the Byang-thang. As noted in Part One, the Rol-pa skya-bdun are indeed well distributed across the Byang-thang as the *yul-lha* of many locales.

Like Pho-bo dbang-phyug, dPa'dam relates that the dPa' chen bzhi (Four [Primeval] Spirit-Mediums) came from the four cardinal directions under the behest of Gu-ru rin-po-che. A Byang-thang *sngags-pa* (lay religious adept) named 'Phrin-las 'od-zer was responsible for initiating dPa' dam at the age of thirteen. dPa' dam was also taught by a Bon lama from sTeng-chen, named bsTan-pa rgyal-mtshan. He says that he continued to acquire possessing deities until the age of 25. dPa' dam was given his antique *me-long* by 'Phrin-las 'od-zer. It is thought to have fallen from the sky and to be *thogs-lcags* (primordial metal). He divides it into three concentric rings: the *phyi-gling*, named *padma sde-brgyad* (lotus of eight sections), the *bar-gling*, called *'khor-lo btsan-brgyad* (circle of eight *btsan*) and the *nang-gling*, which he calls *'bri 'khor bcu-gnyis* (female yak circle of twelve).[57]

The ritual accouterments, costume and altar that dPa' dam used in his trance ceremonies are of the same type that Pho-bo dbang-phyug employs. Although there are many minor variations, it can be stated that these in fact, constitute the standard vocational articles of the *lha-pa* of Upper Tibet. At the onset of the ceremony,

[56] Spelling uncertain.

[57] It seems that the name of the *nang-gling* is related to the popular custom in Upper Tibet of associating female yaks, especially of a bluish color, with female *klu* and *sman* (benefactress deities), which sometimes possess these animals. These decorated yaks (*klu 'bri sngon-mo*) also figure as offerings to the *klu* and *sman* during Lo-gsar (Tibetan New Year) and other occasions throughout Upper Tibet (see Part Five, section viii, pp. 468, 470).

dPa' dam would sprinkle barleycorn on the altar and fill vessels with water, tea, milk, and other beverages such as *'chang* (barley beer) and *rakta* (often an alcohol extract of specially prepared animal blood byproducts and herbs) set out for the deities. Photographs of Gu-ru rin-po-che and sPyan-ras-gzigs were propped up in bowls containing barleycorn. During the demonstration that dPa' dam kindly gave me, he hid his *me-long* behind these photos so as to prevent the deities from descending. Juniper incense was lit as a prelude to the invocation for the deities. He began to recite prayers as he assembled his headdress. After placing the *rigs-lnga* on his head he took up his *ḍa-ma-ru* in his right hand and his *gshang* in his left. The invocations began with Gu-ru rin-po-che, Buddha and dPal-ldan lha-mo respectively. dPa' dam states that these enlightened deities are first invoked because they are the patrons and guardians of the ceremony. Next Lha-chen rta-rgo, dGra-lha rta-rgo, Gangs-lung lha-btsan, rTa-rgo mched-bdun rol-brgyad, and the *rgya-dkar*, in that order, were called. The first two deities invoked are the *lha-ri* (chief mountain gods) of the rTa-rgo group. This was followed by invocations to groups of *klu-mo*, as dPa' dam repeatedly tossed spoonfuls of water into the air. Subsequently, gNyan-chen thang-lha was invoked, followed by the Dang-ra sisterhood. Finally, the *ma-sangs* (ancestral figures), *yul-lha* (territorial deities), *nor-lha* (wealth deities), *pho-lha* (deity of males), Rig 'dzin dkar-po, and Rig 'dzin mkha' 'gro-ma were signaled. The final two deities called would presage the actual possession of dPa' dam, and help to protect him during the trance.

iv) *Khams-pa'i dpa' chung, born circa 1912*

Interviewed in Lu-ma dkar-mo, dGe-rgyas, on July 18 and October 14, 1999.

Khams-pa'i dpa' chung (Little Spirit-Medium of Khams) is a well known *lha-pa* of the gZhung-pa ma-mtshan region (in dGe-gyas county).[58] Unfortunately, despite having a lucid mind, he was ailing

[58] The most famous *lha-pa* in gZhung-pa ma-mtshan of the last generation was Kha-mer, who was a medium for gNyan-chen thang-lha, rTa-rgo, Gangs-ri lha-btsan, rDo-rje rkyang-khra and the Rol-pa skya-bdun. His helping spirits included Khyung-chen sder-lnga (Great Khyung with Five Talons), sGrib-rogs glag-mo mkhal-dkar (Contamination Helper Female Eagle Kidney Fat), and sGrib spyang-mo sngon-nag (Blue and Black Female Contamination Wolf). It is said that Kha-mer healed

when I visited and could not speak a great deal. He has not regularly practiced since the 1960s. Khams-pa'i dpa' chung was reared in 'Brong-tshang, Nag-tshang (Nyi-ma county). He is often called the 'Spirit-Medium of Khams' because this is where his mother came from. He reports that as a young boy he was monk at Nam-mkha' khyung rdzong monastery, in sPu-rang.

Khams-pa'i dpa' chung relates that his father, Nag-tshang dpa' bo dbang-rgyal, was a well known *lha-pa* of the last generation, and was possessed by the same deities as himself. His grandfather was also a *lha-pa*, and was called lCags-bzhu dpa' bo, after his reputed ability to melt iron in his hands when in trance. He was primarily a medium for Dam-can mgar-ba nag-po, a divine blacksmith figure commonly in the retinue of rDo-rje legs-pa.[59] Khams-pa'i dpa' chung's sister was also a spirit-medium known as 'Brong-tshang dpa' mo. She was primarily possessed by forms of *lha-mo* (female deities). It is reported in 'Brong-tshang that 'Brong-tshang dpa' mo died several years back. Earlier members of Khams-pa'i dpa' chung's paternal clan, called Tsha-ba btsan-po (sp.?), were also involved in spirit-mediumship but their names have been lost.

Khams-pa'i dpa' chung traces the origins of spirit-mediumship back to Gling ge-sar of the Tibetan epic. He says that his main defender during trances was dPal-ldan lha-mo, the great protrectress of Tibetan Buddhism. Patrons included the celebrated saints Pha dam-pa sangs-rgyas and Ma-cig lab-sgron, who helped him perform exorcisms. Khams-pa'i dpa' chung also told me that he was a spirit-medium for gNyan-chen thang-lha, Gangs-ri lha-btsan and rTa-rgo ngo-dmar lha-btsan, a *lha-mo* in the retinue of dPal-ldan lha-mo, and the *rgya-dkar* group. He remarks that each of the principal possessing deities had their own zoomorphic remedial deities, which func-

both people and livestock, and could cure rabies. He removed *grib* from clients by placing his *gshang* on the afflicted area and sucking on his *ḍa-ma-ru* held in the other hand. He is also believed to have ridden a *thang-dkar* (lammergeier) on special occasions, and to have had his own *gnyan* spirit servant to carry his ritual implements. Another *lha-pa* of gZhung-pa was dBang-rgyal, who died circa 1960, near the border while trying to flee to India. He was a medium for the popular *btsan* protectors Jag-pa me-len, rTa-rgo and the Rol-pa skya-bdun. Much of this information came from the Upper Tibet cultural expert Tshe-ring chos 'phel, a native of gZhung-pa living in India.

[59] For a description of this deity see Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, pp. 155–159; and Part Three, section vii. Dam-can mgar-ba nag-po is a *yul-lha* in the circle of gNyan-chen thang-lha, serving as one of the generals of the cardinal directions.

tioned to remove *grib* from the client. The *rgya-dkar* deities had sGrib-spyang dmar-po (Red Contamination Wolf), sGrib-spyang sngon-mo (Blue Contamination Wolf) and 'Ug-lu ('Ug-pa) mchu ring (Long Beak Owl). gNyan-chen thang-lha had Dred-mo sog-dkar (Female Brown Bear with White Front Quarters),[60] and rTa-rgo ngo-dmar lha-btsan had Wa-lu rag-pa (Tawny Little Fox) and Thang-dkar (Lammergeier).

v) *sPu-yu, born circa 1939*

Interviewed in sPo-che, gNam-ru, on June 3, 1999.

sPu-yu is one of four sons of a man named rDo-rje, said to have been the last fully practicing *lha-pa* in the Bon enclave of sPo-che.[61] sPu-yu notes that rDo-rje died more than 25 years ago, at the age of 72. He also reports that there were at least three generations of spirit-mediums in this family. sPu-yu's three older brothers have already passed away. All four of them are said to have been possessed by various deities but, unlike his late brothers, sPu-yu did not pursue this vocation. sPu-yu claims that his father while in trance would suck out *grib* from a client's body using his *gshang*. rDo-rje's possessing deities were Nam-ra, Dam-can mgar-ba nag-po and Byang-btsan (a group of deities found in gNam-ru and Nag-tshang). Byang-btsan's remedial deity was sGrib-spyang dkar-po (White Male Contamination Wolf). Although rDo-rje was a Bon-po, the indications received from his son show that his practice belonged to the same tradition of spirit-mediumship followed by the Buddhists of Upper Tibet.

vi) *Bu-chung, born circa 1919*

Interviewed in Dom-ri gna' kha, dPon-stod township, Nag-tshang, on July 9, 1999.

[60] According to the cultural expert Tshe-ring chos 'phel, the brown bear named sNgon-bo lha-sa (Blue One Divine Earth) was a popular helping deity of *lha-pa* in what is now Nag-chu prefecture.

[61] sPo-che township is located northwest of gNam mtsho and is predominantly peopled by those professing the Bon religion. The Bon population, while extending into adjacent Shel-khrab township, is believed by local sources to have been in

Bu-chung is a highly reticent man who would only divulge a limited amount of information. Originally from Mon-pa dung-rtse in Sangs-rgyas, on the east side of the rTa-rgo range, Bu-chung moved to dPon-stod many years ago after losing his livestock. He reports being a spirit-medium for rTa-rgo lha-btsan and Gangs-ri lha-btsan until his ritual implements were confiscated during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Bu-chung observes that his father dPa' bo nyima, who died half century ago as an old man, was also a spirit-medium. Bu-chung declares that the main purpose of spirit-mediumship is to bring *g.yang* (good fortune) to families afflicted with misfortune. He says that he used his *gshang* to remove *grib*, which looked like a worm or a stone, from his clients.

vii) *Lha-pa bstan-pa, born circa 1936*

Interviewed in Seng 'khor, sGer-rtse, on August 1, 2, 2000.

Lha-pa bstan-pa[62] is probably the most respected spirit-medium still actively practicing in the Seng 'khor region. He is a man of strong integrity who patiently tried to answer all my questions. He claims not to smoke or drink, and wears his hair unshorn lest he anger the deities who come into his body. His father immigrated into the region from sMar-khams, in eastern Tibet, and married into a local Hor clan. Lha-pa bstan-pa affirms that both his father and grandfather were spirit-mediums but that he did not learn his profession through them. His grandfather died when he was a young boy and his father returned to sMar-khams when he was around nineteen years old. He notes that his vocation as a *lha-pa* did not begin until he was around 30 years old. He had sought the help of the senior *lha-pa* Khams-pa'i dpa' chung (see section iv) after being involuntarily and repeatedly possessed by bTsan-rgod nam-ra, the main deity of his father and grandfather. Lha-pa bstan-pa explains that Khams-pa'i dpa' chung (also known as mGur-dmar rin-po-che, on account of being a medium for the mGur-lha group of mountain divinities)[63] helped him reconnect with his *lha-rgyud* (hereditary lineage of deities) and to become an effective *lha-pa.*

Lha-pa bstan-pa states that his main possessing deity is the *btsan* king of Bar-tha Nam-ra. His second two most important possessing deities are rTa-rgo ngo-dmar lha-btsan (also his family protective spirit) and rDo-rje rkyang-khra (whom he calls rKyang-sa). He also serves as a medium for Thang-sras mchor-po/Thang-lha'i mchor-po and Gangs-ri lha-btsan. Another possessing deity of last resort is called Ma-mig dgon-btsan, a protector of Ma-mig monastery, in the Seng 'khor region.[64] Lha-pa bstan-pa claims that although Ma-mig dgon-btsan is very powerful and effective, it is difficult to embody and hard on the health of the spirit-medium. It possesses him only in times of dire emergency. Lha-pa bstan-pa maintains that before the séance begins he has no idea which of the possessing deities will visit him, but more times than not it is his primary deity Nam-ra. The possessing deities come to Lha-pa bstan-pa after he invokes them in the prescribed manner. He notes that many types of diseases and misfortune are caused by the elemental spirits, namely the *klu* and *btsan.* He believes that the possessing deities, in conjunction with their retinues of remedial spirits, wrest back clients from the grasp of these harmful spirits.

Lha-pa bstan-pa says that the trance is overseen and guarded by the *btsan* protector Jag-pa me-len (Plunderer Catcher of Fire), particularly the one enshrined at Chos-sku monastery on the Gangs rin-po-che pilgrim's circuit. Along with Nam-ra, Jag-pa me-len guards the *rtsa*, which begin on the ring fingers of both hands, and act as gateways for the possessing deities. In other words, Jag-pa me-len regulates the possession of Lha-pa bstan-pa by controlling access to his body. Lha-pa bstan-pa relates that when Jag-pa me-len enters him other possessing deities cannot, and when he is possessed by another deity Jag-pa me-len resides in the *phyi-gling.* Jag-pa me-len is also said to facilitate the transfer of the spirit-medium's body to the custodial care of the group of helping spirits known as *grib-spyang.*

decline for centuries. According to local estimates, there remain around 300 households in the enclave. For lore about sPo-che and its eponymous sacred mountain see Bellezza 1997, pp. 50, 61, 119, 135, 247; Part Three, section i, pp. 180, 192.

[62] This is a fictitious name that I have given this individual.

[63] Originally, the mGur-lha/'Gur-lha were a group of 13 royal mountain divinities circumscribing the ancient sPu-rgyal state. For basic information on this prominent group of deities see Tucci 1949, p. 730; Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, pp. 223, 224; Bellezza 1997, pp. 47, 48, 77 (fn. 58).

[64] This probably refers to the 'Bar-ba spun-bdun (Seven Blazing Brothers), a local group of *btsan* deities in Ma-mig.

This is necessary, he explains, because his body, in its entirety, must serve as an offering to the spirits harming his client and is conveyed to them under the supervision of Jag-pa me-len.[65] Lha-pa bstan-pa alleges that during the trance, his body is often ritually chopped to pieces and offered to the noxious agents, but due to the protection of Jag-pa me-len and the other possessing deities the demons are unable to consume it and it is returned to him.[66] It is reported that this procedure is carried out to entice the offending spirit to leave the client, thus allowing for the restoration of his or her health.[67]

Lha-pa bstan-pa adds that another important figure in the trance is Dung-skyong dkar-mo (White Conch Protectress), a queen of the *klu-mo*, who in many forms resides in various *gnas-chen* (sacred places) across Upper Tibet and other parts of the Plateau. In dGe-rgyas her best known *gnas-chen* is a lake in gZhung-pa called Dung-khug mtsho. Dung-skyong dkar-mo is very important to Lha-pa bstan-pa because it is the *mo-lha* (protective spirit of females)[68] of his wife, inherited through her clan, the O-bzang. The *mo-lha* is thought to be the conveyor of good fortune to the family, their livestock and the locale. The *mo-lha* is said to reside in the hearth, the front tent pole and under the left armpit, and is closely connected with the family's livestock. Lha-pa bstan-pa asserts that the hearth and tent poles are important because they represent domestic harmony and welfare. Lha-pa bstan-pa affirms that in the séance Dung-skyong dkar-mo controls disease-causing *klu* (implicated in many illnesses and disturbances), and acts as an intermediary between the client and his or her *mo-lha* in order to restore the accord between them. She also monitors the *g.yang 'gugs* (fortune-attracting rituals)[69] sometimes held during the trance. The *lha-pa* says however, that most crucially, Dung-skyong dkar-mo is a protectress and patroness of the trance ceremony, serving as the foundation on which the activities of the other deities rest.[70]

[65] The same type of radical offering is made by *lha-pa* in A-mdo. In the *glu-rol* festival of Reb-skong the villagers ritually sacrifice the entire body of the *lha-pa* to the guardians as a gift for insuring the welfare of the community (Nagano 2000: 604).

[66] This offering of one's body is reminiscent of *gcod*, a mystic procedure intended to increase wisdom realization and the non-attachment to worldly affairs of tantric practitioners. This specific kind of practice is similar to *bdud kyi gcod yul* (cutting through demonic objects) a rite introduced by the great Tibetan *gcod* practitioner Ma-cig lab-sgron (mid 11th to mid 12th century). In a *gcod* rite described by Aryadeva, exalting the *lha* and subduing the *klu* heals an ill person (Edou 1996: 60, 61). For general information on *gcod* see Jamgon Kongtrul Lado Taye 1994; Edou 1996.

[67] This kind of ritual offering of Lha-pa bstan-pa's body conforms in design to the well known *glud* (ransom rituals). In *glud* various inanimate objects and animals are offered to noxious spirits in exchange for the relinquishment of their disease and misfortune-generating activities directed against people, animals and the environment. For information on the *glud* see Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, pp. 360–362; Namkhai Norbu 1995, pp. 77–86; Karmay 1998, pp. 339–380.

[68] For general descriptions of the *mo-lha* see Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, p. 327; Namkhai Norbu 1995, p. 66; Part Three, section viii, p. 311 (fn. 419).

In addition to the *gcod*-like curative system described above, Lha-pa bstan-pa announces that he heals disease by sucking out *grib* (impurities) from clients. *Grib* is said to often resemble a worm when it is removed from a client's body. Most types of *grib* live in the soil from where they attack people and livestock. The *lha-pa* adds that one kind of *grib*, called *sa-btsog* (dirty earth), has the appearance of a red worm. Lha-pa bstan-pa states that the sucking method of healing is associated with a colorful assortment of primitive helping deities, many of which have zoomorphic forms. Generically called *grib-spyang*, these remedial spirits are selected by the possessing *btsan* deity, according to the needs of the client. Lha-pa bstan-pa adds that the possessing deity in turn regulates the activities of the *grib-spyang*.[71]

Lha-pa btsan-pa reports that a popular *grib-spyang* of Nam-ra is Lha-g.yang grib-spyang (Divine Good Fortune Contamination Wolf), a wolf with a black chest and a tawny body. It is used to cure a variety of diseases. A very powerful remedial deity of Nam-ra and Ma-mig dgon-btsan is Bya 'ug-pa, an owl with a dark mottled pattern on its tan body.[72] Its long beak permits it to suck strongly in order to access impurities, and it is especially efficacious in healing mental disorders. Another remedial deity controlled by gNam ra is a group of tawny-colored wolves called 'Jibs-rogs pho-spyang bdun (Seven Male Sucking Helper Wolves). Nam-ra is also said to have

[69] For a description of this and related ceremonies see Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, pp. 365, 366; Namkhai Norbu 1995, pp. 72, 73; Part Five, Section viii.

[70] My research shows that in sPi-ti there were spirit-mediums called *klu-pa*, who specialized in embodying the *klu*. A *klu-pa* from the village of Lha-ri, the late dPal-ldan, was one of the last of these specialists.

[71] A parallel tradition prevailing across Upper Tibet is that of the mountain gods having bears and wolves as their guard animals, who function not unlike the fierce watch dogs of the *'brog-pa* (shepherds). These deities, as *yul-lha*, also have birds, wild ungulates and other animals in their territorial flocks. These zoomorphic spirits are popularly thought to exercise a protective role over the herds of livestock.

[72] The owl is generally considered the bird of the *btsan* (cf. Xie Jisheng 1996: 379).

at his disposal Yas-ram byang-stong sngon-khra, a blue-colored wolf with white markings. It is primarily used to heal livestock diseases, but occasionally human ailments as well. Thang-sras mchor-po uses the remedial deity Dred-chung sog-dkar (Little Brown Bear with White Haunches). This deity is mostly black in color. rTa-rgo ngo-dmar lha-btsan employs a white wolf called Dung-spyang (Conch Wolf). The main remedial deity of Gangs-ri lha-btsan is Zangs gyi mche-ba (Fangs of Copper), a copper-colored wolf spirit efficacious in curing diseases wrought by the *lha-btsan*.

According to Lha-pa bstan-pa, another class of diverse remedial spirits, said to have originated in India, who work under the possessing deities is the *rgya-dkar/rgya-gar* group. He opines that the *rgya-dkar* deities are mainly Himalayan in origin but he is not certain. Among the most notable members of this group is Lha-rgan dkar-po (White Old God), but Lha-pa bstan-pa says that there does not appear to be much specific lore attached to him. Me-ril dmar-po (Red Fire Pellet) is said to cause Lha-pa bstan-pa to consume hot embers while under his influence. Reportedly, this helping deity is effective in the cure of 'hot' diseases (such as fevers, bilious conditions, etc.) and neurological ailments. A-tsa nag-po is said to be named after an Indian tribe or clan. Lha-pa bstan-pa states that while under his influence, he spits and blows on the client as a curative act. The *rgya-dkar* group also includes the Grub-chen brgya-bcu, the 80 adepts of yore.[73] The Grub-chen brgya-bcu are reported to effect states of mind essential to the *lha-pa*'s well-being and effectiveness. They are also conjurers of *sngags* (spells) and *'phrul-ba* (magic) used to cure clients. Srin-mo gangs-dkar is Lha-pa bstan-pa's only female remedial deity. She is attributed with controlling the *klu* and *sa-bdag* (earth spirits)[74] and the healing of diseases caused by them. Bya-rgod

[73] The rGya-gar grub-chen/grub-thob or Mahasiddha were Eighth to 12th century Indian apotheosized tantric practitioners commonly worshipped in Tibet. These archetypal, often socially unconventional figures, are attributed with extraordinary powers and feats. Their role in spirit-mediumship can be explained by their ability to befriend wild animals, and subdue evil spirits and local demigods. There are ordinarily 84 Grub-thob, Lha-pa bstan-pa's reference to 80 is a common abbreviation. For the biographies of the Grub-thob see, for example, Schmid 1958; Dowman 1985. The 80 *rgya-dkar* deities are probably also related to the 30 dPa' rtul or Phu-nu brgya-bcu, the ministers and allies of Gling Ge-sar who in the epic are considered reincarnations of the 80 Grub-chen. The term *phu-nu* (older and younger brothers) is discussed in Karmay 1998, pp. 488–501.

[74] For a general assessment of the *sa-bdag* see Nebesky Wojkowitz 1956.

gyang-khra rgya-dkar is a black and white lammergeier, who is alleged to be effective in curing rabies,[75] fainting and poisoning. Lha-pa bstan-pa notes that this spirit works in conjunction with his three most important possessing deities: Nam-ra, Ngo-dmar lha-btsan and rKyang-sa.

In addition to curing specific health conditions while in trance, Lha-pa bstan-pa carries out the *g.yang 'gugs* (fortune-summoning) ritual as a remedy against misfortune, which seems to plague certain individuals and families. During this ritual, it is said that the client holds and waves the *mda' dar* that they bring with them to the ceremony. The ancillary deities for the ritual are reported to be Lha 'brong dkar-po (Divine White Wild Yak) and bTsan-g.yag dmar-po (Red bTsan Yak). Lha-pa bstan-pa reveals that the possessing deity Ma-mig dgon-btsan is especially useful in increasing the fortunes of people. Likewise, Lha-rgan dkar-po is admirably suited for this task when livestock are involved. Additionally, Nam-ra has a favorite good-fortune animal, the horse—as does Thang-sras mchor-po, the yak. The *rgya-dkar* group is said to use a sheep spirit as its good fortune animal.

Lha-pa bstan-pa observes that young spirit-mediums undergoing training often tie red or white strings around the ring fingers to facilitate spirit-possession. However, he says that experienced *lha-pa* such as himself do not need recourse to such a technique because the descent of the possessing deities is quick and resolute. Lha-pa bstan-pa uses the usual three *me-long*, the larger *phyi-gling* (sometimes he calls it *spyi-gling*, the universal realm), the *bar-gling*, and the smaller *nang-gling*. The *phyi-gling* supports the possessing deity presiding over the trance and the *bla* (animating principle) of the *lha-pa*. Lha-pa bstan-pa explains that at the very moment of possession, the *phyi-gling* acts as a transfer point between the *bla* of the deity and that of the

[75] Healing rabies (*khyi-smyon gyi nad*) was one of the most important curative functions of the spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet. According to Bya-do rin-po-che, in the gNam-mtsho region, the contamination-causing rabies, once removed from the patient's body, could appear in the form of miniature dogs that were then eaten by the *lha-pa*. In Ru 'thor there were two *lha-pa* reported to be highly effective in curing diseases including rabies. These men, named Tshul-khrims and Phun-tshogs, died in India in the 1970s. During Chinese Communist military operations in 1959, Tshul-khrims is said to have led a group of Ru 'thor residents to safety through the guidance of his possessing deities. Information on the *lha-pa* of Ru 'thor came from Nyi-ma bsam-dkar, a native of the region now living in India.

lha-pa. The *bar-gling* is where the diverse group of deities known as *rgya-dkar* converge. The *nang-gling* is for Dung-skyong dkar-mo and her *klu*, and its placement between the other two *me-long* typifies the mediating role this group of deities plays. The *nang-gling* is a small silver *me-long* that Lha-pa bstan-pa inherited from his father.

The séance I observed took place in the morning. Its main purpose was to divine the success of my Upper Tibet Circumnavigation Expedition, and to prevent more houses from collapsing in the unseasonably heavy rain, which was falling in Upper Tibet at that time. As my petition was not related to an emergency or serious illness it would prove to be a relatively subdued ceremony. At the onset a white woolen felt mat (*phying-dkar*) was placed on top of a small table. On the felt, Lha-pa bstan-pa made a counter-clockwise swastika, the full size of the table, with barleycorn. In between the arms of the swastika he poured four small piles of barleycorn. Then a brass bowl full of barleycorn and two of *rtsam-pa* (parched barley meal) were placed on the table. The barley was heaped into a pyramidal shape above the rim of the three bowls. As he worked, the *lha-pa* quietly intoned Buddhist prayers. In one of the bowls with *rtsam-pa* photos of the 16th and 17th Karma-pa were attached to sticks and displayed. In the bowl with barleycorn a photo of Khams-pa'i dpa' chung and one of dPal-ldan lha-mo attached to sticks were displayed. Lha-pa bstan-pa explained that these four figures preside over the ceremony as protectors and patrons. In the other bowl of *rtsam-pa* a photo of the *lo 'khor bcu-gnyis* (Tibetan duodecimal calendar wheel) and one of Ge-sar were set out. These also have a protective function. A white *kha-btags* (offering scarf) was draped over the row of photos. Two wooden stands were placed on top of the central axis of the grain swastika, and the *bar-gling* and *phyi-gling* were inserted into them. The *nang-gling* was attached to a wooden stick and stuck into one of the bowls of *rtsam-pa*, in between the *bar-gling* and *phyi-gling*. A small bowl of water, a *mar-me* (butter lamp) full of tea, a small bowl of melted butter and a small bowl of rock salt completed the array of objects on the altar. While Lha-pa bstan-pa was arranging the altar his son prepared a small bowl of juniper incense. These are reported to constitute the essential offerings to the deities of the trance ceremony.[76]

[76] According to Bon tradition, the general type of altar used by Lha-pa bstan-pa and other *lha-pa* can be traced to the Zhang-zhung period. For example, at the very beginning of a revealed (*gter-ma*) ritual text for the tutelary deity Ge-khod entitled *Ge khod gsang ba drag chen gyis (= gyi) brnal bsang dang bskong ba*, found in the first *Ge khod sgrub skor* volume (New Collection of Bon *bka' brten*, bsTan-pa'i nyi-ma, Lhasa, 1998, vol. 242, nos. 293–321), we read: "In the language of Zhang-zhung: *hrig thun byo ti tshan da dod ci*. In the language of Tibet: the secret *bzlog* and *thun* activities to repel curses and maledictions. They were maintained by Zhang-zhung khri-men, holder of the iron horns of the bird (one of the early kings of Upper Tibet). Whatever the Zhang-zhung Bon ritual it is to be performed in the first month of the fourth season.* On the top of a divine white base (*lha-gzhi dkar-po*; altar with white covering) place barleycorns in the form of a swastika, as well as an image of the *lha*, *gtor-ma* (edible sculptures) and all other collected ingredients."

* The tenth lunar month, which corresponds with the winter solstice. A Tunhuang manuscript states that the ten day period straddling the last month of autumn and first month of winter was also the ideal time for the burial of the *btsan-po* (kings) (Haarh 1969: 371, 422).

The next stage of the ceremony was the donning of the costume. Lha-pa bstan-pa placed a red cotton mantle over his shoulders and tied a red cotton *thod* (turban) on his head. He then took a spoon and tossed water in the direction of the hearth, for the *mo-lha*, patroness of the ceremony. Then, with a *gshang* in his left hand and a *ḍa-ma-ru* in his right, the *lha-pa* waited for his wife to ask what my purpose was in summoning the gods. The invocations then began, a process in which the deities of the *srid-gsum* (namely, the possessing deities of the trance) were called. The tempo of the *gshang* and *ḍa-ma-ru* rapidly picked up speed and the *lha-pa's* body started to rock up and down. This was followed by a calmer interval and then the cessation of the invocation about ten minutes after it began. He proceeded to pick up his *rigs-lnga* headdress and intone prayers ending in *phaṭ*, a powerful syllable used to remove disturbing influences. His *rigs-lnga* had many white scarves and colored ribbons hanging from it. In one of its diadems there was a photo of the 17th Karma-pa and in another Buddha images. The *lha-pa* then put on his *rigs-lnga* and tied it to his head. Momentarily, Nam-ra entered his body, heralding the start of the trance.

Possessed by the deity, Lha-pa bstan-pa picked up his *gshang* and *ḍa-ma-ru*, and appeared to continue with his invocations. His voice had markedly changed and had a lilting, musical quality. From a sitting position, the *lha-pa* came to his knees; a neighbor, who was acting as an assistant, saluted him with outstretched arms. The *lha-pa* now turned in my direction and addressed me in the same rhythmic tone. It was the voice of the deity Nam-ra pronouncing my

intention and fate. This interval lasted about five minutes. His address (*lha-bka'*) was made in *lha-skad* (language of the gods), a virtually unintelligible dialect. *Lha-skad* is not clearly articulated, making analysis difficult but it appears to represent a cant particular to the *lha-pa*, which seems to include a significant amount of Tibetan linguistic archaisms and ritual vocabulary. It was interpreted by his wife after the trance ended; she customarily translates the *lha-pa*'s utterances for their other clients as well. I was to have a successful expedition and my intention was to research local culture. I had come to Upper Tibet to understand and distinguish the qualities of the *lha* and *'dre* (embodiments of the dualities inherent in existence). Finally, I learned that my house was not in danger of imminent collapse due to heavy rain.

After making his pronouncements, the *lha-pa* remained on his knees reciting prayers. At this time his intermediary threw three spoonfuls of tea out the smoke-hole of the tent, followed by the rest of the contents of the bowl. This was done as an offering of thanks to Nam-ra and his retinue of deities for carrying out the work that was entrusted to them. Moments later the *lha-pa* sat up and his *rigs-lnga* fell off his head, signaling the end of the trance. At this point, the *lha-pa* faced his family altar in the west and gave thanks for a successful conclusion. The process of undressing and dismantling the altar then ensued. As this was going on Lha-pa bstan-pa gave everyone in attendance a piece of red cloth taken from his *rigs-lnga*. This was a talisman believed to have been blessed by the mountain god Nam-ra himself.

Jag-pa me-len

To better understand the apotropaic function of Jag-pa me-len, a *btsan* who does not have a characteristic mountain abode, let us examine a Bon exorcistic ritual dependent upon him. As we have seen, Jag-pa me-len is the *rtsa-bdag* (master of the subtle energy channels) and protector of Lha-pa bstan-pa's well-being during the trance. Although Jag-pa me-len is most closely associated with the 'Bri-gung bka' brgyud subsect as a *chos-skyong* (protector of religion), he has also been adopted by the dGe-lugs-pa sect. In the Bon tradition, Jag-pa me-len is reckoned to be a form of dMag-dpon, the great *btsan* protector whose residence is Jo-ri, in Hor-pa township, Gro-shod ('Brong-pa county). Interestingly, in Hor-pa township, there is an old tradition among *sho* (dice) players to utter, "bTsan-rgod jag-

pa me-len" and "A-bse mi-rang dmar-po" for good luck when playing. While not a popular deity, Jag-pa me-len has been incorporated into the Bon religion as well, and this may have occurred by the 12th century. The colophon of a Bon text for Jag-pa me-len entitled *Man ngag gshen gyi rlung bsgrub* (*Detailed Instructions for the Aeolian Performances of the gShen*) states that it was used by a Ghu-ru jo-rtse, who is possibly the same figure as Gu-ru rnon-rtse (born 1136)? Its discovery at a place called sNyug gi rdo-rje sgrom-bu (Treasure of the Adamantine Chest of Bamboo)[77] may indicate that it is also a Buddhist *gter-ma* (revealed text), which was appropriated and modified by the Bon-po.

In the *Man ngag gshen gyi rlung bsgrub* text, the demon destroying capabilities of Jag-pa me-len are amply demonstrated in a short ritual to slay enemies. While different in character from the exorcising rituals of the spirit-mediums, its objective is very much the same: to eliminate trouble-causing entities, particularly those of a demonic nature. Like Lha-pa bstan-pa's and the other spirit-mediums' pantheon of possessing *btsan* deities, Jag-pa me-len's primary function in this Bon ritual is to destroy malignant influences in whatever form they appear. The ritual features the creation of a *ling-ga*,[78] a likeness drawn on paper (or dough figures) of the enemy incriminated in causing harm to Bon practitioners, or their circle of sponsors and benefactors. In both this Bon ritual and those conducted by the spirit-mediums a *mda' dar* is erected as one of the supports for the presiding deity (para ii). For such ritual performances to be effective the correct enunciation of the spells is imperative. This is stressed in the text by providing a breakdown of their vowel components (paras ii, iii). Once the harming force is installed in the *ling-ga* by

[77] This text is found in a volume of rituals for A-bse, the Bon king of the *btsan* (New Collection of the Bon *bka' brten*, vol. 198, nos. 215–217). Its colophon reads: "Treasure of the Adamantine Chest of Bamboo. It was transmitted to La-stod grags-pa ye-shes. lDong-sgom nyi-ma got it from the lineage of Bla-ma ldong-shig nam-mkha'. It is the treasure of Ghu-ru jo-rtse. It has been spell checked and compared with 10 versions of the text." (*snyug gi rdo rje sgrom bu'i gter ma'o / la stod grags pa ye shes la rgyud (= brgyud) / bla ma ldong shig nam mkha'i bu rgyud / ldong sgom nyi ma la gnang / ghu ru jo rtse'i gter ma'o / dpe tshan mi gcig pa bcu la dag po gtug go / zhus so */ U ya * / Ag tham * / rgya rgya rgya* /*).

* These last four lines of the colophon indicate that the text has been carefully compiled and checked, and that it must be kept confidential.

[78] Also spelled: *ling*, *lingga*.

inclusion of its name, it is ritually killed with a specially prepared bow and arrow (para iv):

(i) This is the ferocious, poisonous razor sharp knife of me, Ghu-ru jo-rtse. These are the directions for the combined three Jag-pa. He is also called Jag-pa me-len (Plunderer Catcher of Fire). This is the *btsan* Jag-pa rta-rgyug (Plunderer Race Horse). I first did this [ritual] at Ri-bo bshol-mda' 'dzin (Holder of the Plowshare Mountain). If this is performed Jag-pa races on his horse and can send *pho-log*.[79] Nothing else needs to be said.[80]

(ii) This is the method of performance: Make a *brub-khung*[81] with a small opening and wide interior, piled up as a red triangular mandala. Paint red goat's blood on it. Draw a *ling-ga* (effigy) with the name and clan of the oath-breaker. Put it inside a goat skull. Place it inside the *brub-khung*. Erect 21 pickets.[82] Set up a tent of full width red silk. Suspend a single owl feather and a red flag on top of an arrow. Install one red triangular *bshos-bu* (a kind of *gtor-ma*). Place the first pouring of beer. Visualize yourself as the *yi-dam* divinity. Recite these essential spells.[83] These three together are the calling, deputing and slaying [spells]. There are 35 syllables in these mantras, and eight *i* vowels, four *e* vowels, fifteen *u* vowels, and six subscribed *r* letters. [With the mantras] cast black mustard seeds and *ske-rtse* (*Roripa indica*) *thun* (magic missiles).[84]

(iii) Then, on a cane bow make a bow string from the hair of a red goat tail. Ornament a bamboo [shaft] with crow feathers. Make the arrow point of *skyer-ba* (*Berberis*). Repeat this mantra one thousand times: *Om bhi shu tri sham 'ur pa dgra rbad nan*. Recite this mantra and blow on the arrow point. Shoot the middle of the chest of the *ling-ga*. This mantra has 12 syllables, two *i* vowels, two *u* vowels, one *o* vowel, and

[79] A cholera-like disease. According to Tibetan tradition, *pho-log* causes the fire in the stomach to malfunction and agitates the beneficial organisms in the intestine, causing much bloating (Das: 829; *Tshig mdzod chen mo*: 1728).
[80] This line indicates that no other invocations or ritual performances are needed to enlist the aid of Jag-pa, and that it is sufficient to seal the fate of the unfortunate.
[81] A common exorcistic device in Tibetan rituals. It consists of a triangular enclosure used to imprison demons, which are then slain and liberated.
[82] *rTsang*. Commonly made of strips of *skyer-pa* (barberry), a wood used in rituals involving wrathful deities. The strips of wood are usually interwoven diagonally, and it appears that they form a fence around the *brub-khung*. This fencing is an essential part of rituals involving wrathful entities in order for them to be effective and to protect the officiants from harm potentially emanating from them.
[83] Seven lines of spells are included in the text.
[84] The following line is largely effaced from my copy of the text and not included in the translation.

two subscribed *r* letters.[85] Keep the arrow point in the upright direction [in which it grew]. Do not shape its joints with a knife. Do not let the crow feathers, etc. be singed by fire. On the *skyer-ba* arrow-point make a tang and insert it in inside the bamboo.

(iv) Make the arrow-point on the lower part [of the bamboo]. Apply red goat's blood [to it]. Shoot the middle of the chest of the *lingga*. For the *skyes-bu* (holy man) who has performed the above [set of seven mantras] draw the *ling-ga* as soon as the enemy appears. Repeat the lower mantra one thousand times, blowing on the arrow-point. If the middle of the chest of the *lingga* is struck, Jag-pa does not have to arrive at the [enemy's] residence; he will die of *gzer-thabs*.[86] Burn the slaughtered *linga* in a specially prepared fire. Bury the ashes on top of a pass or elsewhere on paths where the *btsan* roam. Hurl the *gtor-ma* in the direction of the enemy. Excoriate the enemy by flailing.[87]

(v) This [deity] is called Jag-pa me-len and also Jag-pa rta-rgyug, as well as Srog-bdag dmar-po rno-mthu (Prophetic Red Life-Force Master). This is the aeolian performance of A-bse, the modalities of performance of the essential mind [of the deity].

Transliteration of the Man ngag gshen gyi rlung bsgrub *text*

(i) bdag 'dra ghu ru jo rtse'i / gdug pa dug gi spu gri / jag pa sum bsgril gyi man ngag / btsan jag pa me len yang zer / btsan jag pa rta rgyug 'di / ri bo bshol mda' 'dzin du mdzad / 'di bsgrub pas na / jag pa rta la rgyug pa yang / pho log thong ba yin / phyi ma smos ci dgos /

(ii) 'di'i bya thabs la / manḍāla dmar po zur gsum brtsegs la brub khung kha rub pa zhabs yangs pa byed / ra dmar khrag gis byug la / dam nyams ming rus ling ga bris te / ra thod la bcug / de brub khung du bzhag / rtsang nyi shu rtsa gcig btsug / dar dmar kha gang gi gur steng du phub / mda' 'ug sgro ma gcig la dar dmar po kha gang btags la / bshos bu zur gsum pa gcig gzug / chang phud bzhag la / rang nyid yi dam lha ru bsgom zhing snying po 'di la drang / *** / 'bod rbad bsad gsum dril ba yin /

[85] The next two lines of my copy of the text are damaged. They pertain to the red bowstring and the need to keep the bamboo shaft oriented in the same direction it grew in.
[86] A sudden, devastating disease.
[87] Traditionally, ritualists use the end of their shawls to brush away any evil residue. They also clap loudly and motion with their arms for this purpose.

sngags 'bru sum cu so lnga yod / gu gu brgyad / 'greng bu bzhi / zhabs kyu bco lnga / ra sta drug / nyungs nag ske rtse'i thun gyis brab / line not legible /

/ *** / Seven lines of spells.

(iii) de nas sba'i gzhu la / ra dmar gyi rnga bal la gzhu rgyud bya / smyug ma la pho rog sgros sgron / skyer ba'i mdel bya la / sngags 'di la stong btab / A (= Om) bhi shu tri sham 'ur pa dgra rbad nan / ces sngags bgrangs la mdel la phus btab la / ling ga'i snying khar brdeg / sngags 'bru bcu gnyis yod / gu gu gnyis / zhabs kyu gnyis / ra sta gnyis / na ro gcig / ra dmar spu'i gzhu rgyud bgril pa'i dus (illegible passage interpolated) smyug ma'i tshigs ma log pa'i / rtse mo steng phyogs su bstan / tshigs la gri mi btang / pho rog gi sgrog (= sgro) la me shor la sogs 'dres mi bya / skyer ba'i rtse mo la mdel brnyes byas la / smyug ma'i nang du bcug /

(iv) rtsa ba phyogs mdel rtse byas la / ra dmar gyi khrag bskus / lingga'i snying khar brdeg go / gong du bsgrub pa sogs pa'i skyes bus / dgra byung ma thag tu ling ga bris te / sngags 'og ma la stong mdel la btab nas / lingga'i snying khar btab na / jag pa khyim du ma slebs par gzer thabs kyis 'chi / lingga bsgral nas sbyin bsregs byas la / thal ba la gong kha la sogs btsan 'grim lam du mnan / gtor ma dgra phyogs su 'phang / g.yab brdeb dmod bcol drag tu bya /

(v) 'di la btsan jag pa me len yang zer / btsan jag pa rta rgyug yang zer / srog bdag dmar po'i rno mthu yang zer / A bse rlung sgrub / yang snying thugs kyi 'phrin las /

viii) *Phyogs-bzhi lha-pa, born circa 1927*

Interviewed in Seng 'khor 'O-ma, sGer rtse, on August 8, 2000, and June 6, 2001.

Phyogs-bzhi lha-pa is the best known contemporary spirit-medium in the Seng 'khor region of western sGer-rtse county. Unfortunately, he is mostly deaf and suffers from other infirmities, limiting the amount of information I could obtain from him. Still, due to his good nature, he tried to answer as many of my questions as he could. He states that he received his title Phyogs-bzhi lha-pa (Four Cardinal Directions Spirit Medium) due to the relative placement of his homeland to his possessing deities. These four mountain divinities are: 1) north—Lha-g.yang (Divine Good Fortune), located in northern sGer-rtse; 2) west—Gangs-ri lha-btsan; 3) south—Ngur-ru gdong-btsan, located in the Ru 'thor region; and 4) east—A-dmar rol-pa, located east of the sGer-rtse county seat. He adds that he also had the possessing deity Nam-ra as a central figure. Moreover, Phyogs-bzhi lha-pa says that he occasionally served as a spirit-medium for subsidiary forms of gNyan-chen thang-lha.

Phyogs-bzhi lha-pa affirms that his first possession came at the age of 25 after he had killed a large red fox; soon thereafter he began to suffer from bouts of insanity. He says that he was taken to Ma-mig monastery (in Seng 'khor) and came under the charge of a lama from Khams. This lama divined that he had made a terrible mistake killing the fox because it belonged to a *btsan*. Phyogs-bzhi lha-pa notes that for example, a mountain to the north of his camp called dKyil-rdo (Circle Rock) has as its *ri-bdag* (mountain master) a *btsan* in the form of a red fox. Realizing that his insanity was brought on through the slaying of the fox, by his *byin-brlabs* (blessings) the lama was able to cure him. The lama then consecrated Phyogs-bzhi lha-pa, enabling him to become a medium for the *btsan*. The lama instructed him to wear the skin of the fox he had slain, and said that it would either kill him or aid him in his work as a *lha-pa*. It so passed that the latter held true. Phyogs-bzhi lha-pa avers that some time after his initiation, twelve people who were possessed by spirits were summoned to Ma-mig monastery to be tested by the lama from Khams. It was discovered that ten of these people were possessed by demons, but that Phyogs-bzhi lha-pa and another man named Karma rgya-mtsho were possessed by authentic mountain deities.

During the Chinese Cultural Revolution, all of Phyogs-bzhi lha-pa's ritual paraphernalia was destroyed except for his *gling*. This small antique mirror contains the *phyi-gling*, *bar-gling* and *nang-gling*. It is considered by him to be *thog-lcags* (primordial celestial metal), and was inherited from his father. His father was not a *lha-pa* and had used this mirror on a *mda' dar*, a luck-bestowing device that the family kept. When all the other equipment of Phyags-bzhi lha-pa was being burnt, this mirror is said to have escaped by flying off to Gangs rin-po-che. The *lha-pa* claims that it would circle the holy mountain on its own accord, and periodically return to the family's

tent to deliver water and other sanctified substances from Gangs rin-po-che. Phyogs-bzhi lha-pa and his family would find these gifts in the morning on their altar.

Phyogs-bzhi lha-pa says that he is not aware of all the helping deities and their activities during the trance. They belonged to what he calls the *grib-spyang* (contamination wolf) class and included a wolf, a giant copper-colored dog, an owl, *khyung* and *thang-dkar*. A remedial spirit in the circle of Lha-g.yang was Dred-mong lag-dkar, a brown bear with white paws and a white chest.

Phyogs-bzhi lha-pa claims that his was the work of the gods and that he is not aware of all the intricacies of the methods they used to render service to people through him. He estimates to have gone into trance 50 or 60 times a year. Like other *lha-pa* I have interviewed, he reports never to have demanded payment from his clients. Phyogs-bzhi lha-pa states that over the course of his career, he has healed approximately seven people, twelve yaks and 30 or 40 sheep from *khyi-smyon-nad* (mad-dog disease). According to the *lha-pa*, various elemental spirits and their agencies are the cause of disease. There are three main types of disease and pestilence *me-lhog*, *sa-lhog* and *chu-lhog* (of the fire, earth and water elements respectively). Components of these three elements are thought to be part of the therapies used to heal the *lhog* diseases. A number of impurities causing diseases are said to manifest as worm-like creatures. One of these is *sa-btsog* (dirty earth), a worm of the *klu*. Phyogs-bzhi lha-pa observes that if a *btsan* is causing illness or misfortune it is forcibly removed from the client by one of the possessing deities of the trance and his spirit helpers. If the *pho-lha* (male protective deity) is creating disturbances for the client, the possessing deity will prescribe that he carry out a *lha-gsol* (propitiation and offerings), as well as dedicate certain animals of the herd to the *pho-lha* and setting them free.[88]

ix) *Lha-klu, born circa 1948*

Interviewed in gZhung-pa ma-mtshan, dGe-rgyas, August 14 and 15, 2000, and October 15, 2002.

[88] The biography of Mi-la ras-pa records a Bon healing ritual, in which after being cured the patient frees a yak for the *pho-lha*, a sheep for the *dgra-lha* and a goat for the *srog-lha* (Stein 1972: 238, 239).

Lha-klu[89] is one of the younger spirit-mediums interviewed in Upper Tibet. He is also one of the only *lha-pa* still practicing in dGe-rgyas county. He is a man of much integrity and one of the area's most successful herders. He has a generally excellent reputation in his locality regarding his vocation as a spirit-medium. He was willing to address my many questions without hesitation.

Lha-klu reports that his family originally came from sMad-ma, A-mdo (A-mdo county), and immigrated to western Tibet three generations ago. His paternal uncle, Nor-bu btsan-po, was a spirit-medium for Rol-pa skya-bdun and an emanation of dPal-ldan lha-mo. His father, bSod-nams dar-rgyas (died circa 1978, at the age of 77), was a very adept *sgrung-pa* (bard) for Gling ge-sar. Lha-klu maintains that he is the ninth generation[90] of spirit-medium spanning both his maternal and paternal lines. These included his paternal grandmother, dKar-skyid (clan: Mar-tsha), her father Gro-lo, and her grandfather bSam 'phel. According to Lha-klu's family tradition (said to have existed in written form until the Communist period), in very early times, Rol-pa skya-bdun and the celestial yak Lha-g.yag dkar-po manifested the first spirit-medium. Lha g.yag dkar-po was also responsible for destroying a primordial black yak demon.

At the age of thirteen, Lha-klu reports that he found himself suddenly possessed by Lha-mo. These visitations caused him to have heart pains and various mental disturbances. Around this time, a *rkyang* came near his tent and he followed it. He says that his neighbors went to search for him and eventually found him in a mad state. This caused a considerable amount of consternation among his family and neighbors because it was not yet known what was causing his possessions. Starting around age fifteen, Lha-klu states that he received limited training from his paternal uncle Nor-bu btsan-po. The two of them would perform together, and to regulate the entry of the deities red strings were tied around his ring fingers. Lha-klu learned that the possessing deities reside in the three main *rtsa* (subtle bio-energy channels) of his body. His practice was

[89] In defense of this individual and his vocation, I use a pseudonym in this publication. As a matter of policy, I have opted to employ pseudonyms for the younger spirit-mediums.

[90] This nine-generation attribution is a convention used by *lha-pa* in Upper Tibet to indicate the antiquity and propriety of their lineage and should not be taken literally.

consecrated by Tshe-ring bsam-grub, an elderly *sngags-pa* from rDza-chu-kha, in northeastern Tibet. This included placing cloth strips of five different colors on his right shoulder. Lha-klu recounts that when he was around 30 years old, a lama named 'Chi-med rin-po-che of bKra-shis chos-gling monastery, in Tshwa-kha (in dGe-rgyas county), verified that his possessions were by authentic deities. He performed *rab-gnas* (consecration), *khrus-gsol* (ablutions ritual) and *rtsa-lung* (insuring integrity of the nerve channels) rituals for him, strengthening Lha-klu's practice further.[91] Lha-klu declares that 'Chi-med rin-po-che exhorted him to serve all people without discrimination, and to never refuse a request for help. Lha-klu admits that on account of difficult sociopolitical conditions in Tibet, his training was rudimentary. Consequently, there are many aspects of his vocation that he is unsure about, and the authority of his practice largely rests on his family lineage.

Lha-klu affirms that he belongs to the same *lha-rgyud* (lineage of deities) as his ancestral paternal clan members. Although none of his seven children have yet taken up his work as a spirit-medium, he believes that after his death it is very likely that the same deities will possess one of them. Lha-klu estimates that since thirteen years of age, he has gone into trance around 3000 times, often performing many days of the year. However, during the Chinese Cultural Revolution his work was curtailed and his ceremonial paraphernalia confiscated (except for a mirror), which explains why he did not fully develop his practice until rather late in life. He states that he has never demanded payment for his services and works for those who cannot afford to make an offering. It is clear that Lha-klu is responsible for a kind of community-based, egalitarian and affordable form of health-care. Lha-klu readily divulges that not all his clients have been helped by him, but his perceived success rate is high enough to insure a strong demand for his services.

According to Lha-klu, there are three categories of spirit-mediums:

1) Superior—can perform all kinds of magic, such as herding wildlife, traveling under the earth and flying in the sky. By travelling in this way the superior spirit-medium can easily reach his patients

[91] An analogous ceremony is described in Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, pp. 425, 426.

even if they are far away, thus dispensing with the need for a horse. Also by moving in the sky and underworld, the *lha-pa* blesses the beings that reside in these realms. When a superior *lha-pa* dies his *bla* is conveyed to a celestial palace on top of the sacred mountain sPom-ra or Thang-lha.[92]

2) Good—a warm-hearted individual who can cure disease and generally help people (Lha-klu places himself in this category).
3) Inferior—has the power to channel deities but the *the'u-rang* and *mi-shi btsan-skyes* demons as well. This category of *lha-pa* can also do beneficial work but if he uses his power for demonic ends he will destroy himself.

What must be a subsidiary form of dPal-ldan lha-mo oversees the activities of the trance and is said to possess Lha-klu.[93] Lha-mo has zoomorphic and anthropomorphic types of *'jibs-spyang* (remedial deities). The zoomorphic variety include helping spirits in the form of a tiger, leopard, lion, black bear, brown bear, wolf, and snake all of which have nine heads. Lha-klu explains that these spirits have nine heads because many different types of faculties are needed to eliminate the 360 types of *gdon* (demons) and 424 classes of diseases. Lha-klu believes that brain diseases are caused by members of the *lha-srin sde-brgyad* (Buddhist classification of elemental spirits), heart diseases by the *gnyan*, and diseases of the limbs and ligaments by the *klu*. Some diseases are also precipitated by dirty water and earth.

Lha-klu reports that another remedial spirit of Lha-mo is Bya-ba lag-ring, a *khyung* with long talons. He adds that the anthropomorphic helping spirits are the mKha' 'gro sde-lnga, five female deities who personify the *'phrin-las* (spiritual activities) scheme and the

[92] The belief in a celestial after-world has ancient precedents and may help to explain the location of pre-Buddhist tombs on mountaintops. See Bellezza 2001, pp. 33, 34; 2002a, pp. 97–99.

[93] As dPal-ldan lha-mo is regarded as a *'jig-rten las 'das-pa'i srung-ma* (an enlightened being that has passed beyond the Buddhist world of suffering), it would appear that some member of her large retinue must actually be responsible for the *lha-pa*'s possession. My preliminary assessment of this deity indicates that it represents a vestigial indigenous form, perhaps belonging to the tradition of Byang-thang lake goddesses. Nevertheless, dPal-ldan lha-mo could, within Buddhist theological bounds, function as a *rtsa'i bdag-mo* (defender of the *lha-pa*'s subtle channels), one of the functions imputed to her by Lha-klu. Comprehensive reviews of this important Tibetan protective deity are found in Tucci 1949, pp. 590–595; Nebesky Wojkowitz 1956, pp. 22–38.

overhead direction. The *mkha' 'gro* of the east (thunderbolt lineage) cures skin diseases, while the *mkha' 'gro* of the south (jewel lineage) cures aliments of the bones and organs. The *mkha' 'gro* of the west (lotus lineage) cures diseases of the heart and brain, and the *mkha' 'gro* of the north (felicity lineage) allays conditions affecting the *rtsa* (subtle channels). The *mkha' 'gro* of the overhead direction is a helper and protector of the *lha-pa*. Lha-klu states that there are other remedial deities in the circle of Lha-mo but he is not aware of their names and specific activities. In addition to these he says that there are four *gnam gyi lha-mo* (sky goddesses), four *bar gyi lha-mo* (goddesses of the intermediate zone) and four *sa yi lha-mo* (goddesses of the underworld).

Lha-klu affirms that another possessing deity group is the Rol-pa skya-bdun brotherhood, headed by Rol-gtor-mchog. This group serves as the protector of his subtle channels, and members of his *btsan 'khor* (circle) function as remedial spirits. Lha-klu envisions the Rol-pa skya-bdun as being wrathful tantric deities with six hands, three eyes, six fangs, and copper-red clothing and body color. The Rol-pa skya-bdun also have nine-headed zoomorphic remedial spirits. Lha-klu observes that possession by Lha-mo is usually characterized by relatively pacific activity, while that of Rol-pa skya-bdun is much more violent.

Lha-klu asserts that other deities that help bring about the cure of a client and who protect him are his *phugs-lha* (family protective spirits), which can be summoned, in difficult cases, by either Lha-mo or Rol-pa skya-bdun. They do not however, possess him and thus play what we might call an officiating role. His *phugs-lha* (commonly found in families throughout Upper Tibet) include Ma-mo (fierce female spirit in the retinue of dPal-ldan lha-mo), mGon-po (Mahakala, a black-colored protector) and rTa-rgo ngo-dmar lha-btsan. Another *phugs-lha* or *mo-lha* Klu-mi-mgon (of the *klu-btsan* class), a deity with many *klu* and *klu-mo* in his retinue, is especially important. Klu-mi-mgon is said to also have female aspects. He/she is attributed with widespread curative capabilities and is useful in treating diseases caused by the *gnyan* (implicated in swelling, and bone and heart diseases),[94] *klu* (skin and contagious diseases), and the *sa-bdag* (livestock and hereditary diseases). The domestic shrine for the *mo-lha* Klu-mi-mgon is found on the rear left interior wall of Lha-klu's tent. It consists of a garland of pieces of ears from slaughtered sheep and goats that belonged to the family's herds, blue *rlung-rta* (prayer flags), and tufts of wool from yaks and sheep. It is reported that the front *ka-ba* (pole of the tent) is also dedicated to the *mo-lha*, and has a white scarf tied to it. The rear tent pole acts as a shrine for the male protective spirits including the *phugs-lha/pho-lha* and *dgra-lha* (warrior deity).[95] On it a musket and swords are attached, as well as a piece of the tent pole that Lha-klu says was used by his parents.

Lha-klu relates that in 1972, an extremely large and long-lived ram (died aged 14) was born to his family. Extraordinarily, this ram had four horns. It is said to have behaved unusually, preferring to be alone, and in front of, the rest of the herd. It always reached new pastures first. Called *bstan-lug* (sheep of the *btsan*) by Lha-klu, it is thought to have been closely associated with Ngo-dmar lha-btsan and Rol-pa skya-bdun as their mount when they visited the family's camp. Lha-klu explains that at the *lha-gsol* (propitiation ceremony for local divinities) held on Lo-gsar, this sheep was decorated with ochre designs, while colored tassels were attached to his ears and dabs of butter stuck on his horns as an offering to the *btsan* deities. Its skull has been preserved by Lha-klu as a kind of icon. He pronounces that the ram's erect upper horns symbolize the *mda' dar*, and its drooping lower horns, an arm cradling a tray of *phye-mar* (barley meal and butter preparation).

Lha-klu makes known that the main purpose of the trance ceremony is to cure mental and physical ailments. Nevertheless, it can also be used in the *g.yang 'gugs* (fortune-calling procedure), when a family is suffering from a rash of bad luck. In this ritual the client must provide various food and beverage offerings, and the hair of different colored livestock. Lha-klu makes use of a bamboo *mda' dar* with three joints and an ancient iron tip, ornamented with coral, turquoise and ribbons of five colors as the fortune-attracting device of the possessing deity. The main deity said to preside over the *g.yang 'gugs* is Klu-mi-mgon. Another group of deities participating in the *g.yang 'gugs* is Nor-lha mched-brgyad (Brotherhood of Eight Wealth

[94] It is reported that the plague in Tibet is attributed to the *gnyan* (Hoffman 1961: 18). For a general assessment of the *gnyan* see Tucci 1949, pp. 721, 722.

[95] For a general survey of the *dgra-lha* see Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, pp. 318–340.

Gods), led by Arya dzam bha-la.[96] Lha-klu describes this group of *nor-lha* as each having a different color and a different animal head. The yak god Lha g.yag dkar-po also plays a role in the fortune-summoning ritual.

For the séance, Lha-klu uses a single antique brass *me-long* discovered by his paternal uncle many decades ago in the sands of Ma-pham g.yu-mtsho. It is thought to have fallen from the sky. He employs his *me-long* in the usual way, as an assembly point for the deities of the trance. Instead of the *gshang*, Lha-klu uses a *sil-snyan* (large flat-bell), which is rung in a similar manner by waving the left hand. In his right hand, he holds a *ḍa-ma-ru* while reciting the invocations to the deity. The *ḍa-ma-ru* is also used to suck *grib* from patients. His altar is set up in the standard fashion with the requisite offerings. Photos placed on it include dPal-ldan lha-mo, mGon-po and the Karma-pa. For the trance, he wears a mantle, apron and *rigs-lnga* ornamented with the five rGyal-ba rigs-lnga. Above the central diadem of the *rigs-lnga* there is a lammergeier plume,[97] which

[96] For information on the various forms of this deity see Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, pp. 68–81. Sam-grub, a senior Ge-sar bard (interviewed in Lhasa in October, 1997), sings the following lines: "If you want to increase your business pray to white Dzam-bha-la. If you want to increase your wealth pray to black Dzam-bha-la. If you want to be a leader you must be close to those who lead. If you want to be healthy you must eat a variety of foods. If you want to be happy it is better to be the wife of an older man" (implies that he is better able to provide).

[97] The early rock art of Upper Tibet seems to depict a variety of anthropomorphous figures wearing feathers on top of their heads. Hunters, priestly figures and what may represent deities are portrayed in this manner. According to the quasi-historical text *g.Yung drung bon gyi rgyud bum*, the ancient *gshen* priests were given lammergeier feathers to wear in their turbans as a sign of their exalted position in society (Bellezza 2000: 64). See, also, Karmay 1972, p. 44. In the commentary section of the Bon cosmological work *Srid pa'i mdzod phugs*, attributed to Dran-pa nam-mkha' (Eighth century), we read about the *rtsigs* (superior distinction) for the body conferred on the *gshen* (Bon priests) in the time of Tibet's eighth king, Gri-gum btsan-po: "On the regal white turban of *dar-seng* (a type of silk) the quivering feathers of the vulture, the king of birds, were erected." (*dar seng la dkar po'i 'gying thod la / bya rgyal rgod kyi ldem phod btsugs pa /*). In a text entitled *Ngan song skye sgo gcod pa'i mdo* (Bon *bka' 'gyur*, vol. 67, nos. 1–63), a work of ritual performances for the higher deities, rediscovered by Lhun-grub thogs-med, there are references to the feather attributes of two primordial *gshen* manifestations of sTon-pa, the founder of the Bon religion (no. 39, lns. 3, 4). These feathers appear to have been worn on the head: *ye gshen rgod kyi 'phar 'dab can* (primordial *gshen* holder of the flapping vulture wings and/or tail [feathers]), and *ye gshen rma bya'i ldem rgyang can* (primordial *gshen* holder of the quivering peacock feathers). In the text *Bon zhwa dkar gyi bshad legs pi wang drug 'gyur* (attributed to Bla-chen dran-pa and transmitted to g.Yung-drung gling-pa, 8 folios) it records that in addition to the Bon *zhwa-dkar* (white hat of Bon) of general religious use, there is another type of hat that is permissible for Bon usage. It is described as having a lotus design, and is white, blue and black in color. This hat has *'phur-ma* (tassels) and *bya-phod* (bird feathers) on it.

is said to have a therapeutic function for the entire ceremony and its participants. It is thought to emanate healing rays of light. Lha-klu also observes that the plume symbolizes that after death the great spirit-mediums will reside in the palaces of the mountain gods. The eyes on the *snyan-gshog* (rainbow flaps) of Lha-klu's headdress represent the eyes of the *gza'* (planetary gods) who destroy harming forces and demons, and help cure patients.

The trance ceremony is said to start with a refuge prayer to Lha-klu's root lamas, followed by other Buddhist refuge prayers. Next he recites a *bsangs-gsol* (prayers featuring the use of incense as a fumigant) on behalf of Gu-ru rin-po-che and then a *gser-skyems* (prayers accompanied by libations) to the *gzhi-bdag* (class of local deities), *yul-lha* and *lha-srin sde-brgyad* (eight types of minor Buddhist deities). This is followed by invocations to the deities of the trance and their retinues. There is very little that Lha-klu could tell me about the actual trance because he has no recollection of what takes place during it.

In earlier times, according to Lha-klu, *lha-pa* such as his great great-grandfather bSam 'phel could summon antelopes, onagers and lammergeiers and ride them at will (just as the pre-Imperial *gshen* priests are recorded as doing in Bon texts).[98] These animals are also said to have carried the spirit-medium's ritual equipment. A *lha-pa* who lived many generations ago, and who had supernatural powers, was an individual called Nam-mkha' 'jigs-med. He was a medium for a form of dPal-ldan lha-mo.

x) *dPa' mo, born circa 1925*

Interviewed in rTa-ra, Bar-yangs township, 'Brong-pa, April 14, 2001.

dPa' mo reports that she began to be possessed by spirits around fifteen years of age. She relates that her family was afraid that she had fallen under evil influences because these possessions caused her

[98] The theme of riding lammergeiers and related birds can be historically traced to the Tun-huang manuscripts, written prior to the Tenth century. In the tale of the lTong-te'i mye-kru family, its young heroine escapes man-eating fiends by grasping the tail of a *thang-kar* bird and flying to the heavens (*gnam/dgung*) See Thomas 1957: Part 3, p. 31, verses 69–79.

much distress. The situation was alleviated some years later when dPa' mo traveled to Gangs rin-po-che to meet the 16th Karma-pa,[99] who performed a *rab-gnas* (consecration) for her. She says that the Karma-pa made a determination that legitimate mountain deities possessed her. She tells that she practiced as a *dpa' mo* until the Communist period, when all her ritual paraphernalia were lost. She now claims to have very little recollection of her activities as a spirit-medium. Her possessing deities are said to have been rTa-rgo ngo-dmar lha-btsan, Gangs-ri lha-btsan and Thang-lha'i mi-dkar rta-dkar (White Man and White Horse of Thang-lha). dPa' mo also had a remedial deity in the form of a wolf (*grib-spyang*).

xi) *Pho-bo lha-dbang, born circa 1935*

Interviewed in McLeod Ganj, India, February 19–22, and March, 13–20, 2002.

Pho-bo lha-dbang (also called dPa' bo lha-dbang and dPon-skya lha-dbang) affirms belonging to a renowned family of spirit-mediums which, according to his tradition, have been practicing since the time of Gu-ru rin-po-che. He was born in the Ring-pa *tsho-pa*[100] of the erstwhile gNam-ru district (dPal-mgon county), in a locale called sGong do nag-thig (Egg Headland Black Spots). sGong do, a tiny rocky isle, is located in a small lake known as sGong-dmar, one of the eleven main lakes of Ring-pa.[101] Pho-bo lha-dbang reports that in 1959, along with his parents and other family members, he fled Tibet for Nepal. He resided in Dol-po with his family until 1977. They now live in Kollegal, in south India.

Pho-bo lha-dbang states that his paternal clan is called dPon-skya, and those members belonging to his patriline were *lha-pa* in an unbro-

[99] Karma-pa rig-pa'i rdo-rje (1924–1981) visited Gangs rin-po-che in 1947. He is recorded as making three three-day circuits around the holy mountain as well as a circumambulation of Ma-pham g.yu-mtsho (Douglas and White 1976: 114).

[100] *Tsho-pa* were the various confederated camps or subdivisions of Byang-thang districts in the pre-Communist Tibetan government period. In the Communist period, the *tsho-pa* quite frequently correspond to the administrative subdivision known as *shang* (township). For a list of the thirteen *tsho-pa* of gNam-ru see Bellezza 1997, p. 276 (fn. 6).

[101] According to Pho-bo lha-dbang, the other lakes of Ring-pa are: g.Yu-mtsho, dKar-ru lha-mtsho, Thang-bshud (sp.?), gSer-ldings, Bu-gu (sp.?), dGu-sgrel (sp.?), Rag-gri, mTsho lung-kyog, mTsho-chung, and mTsho-bkra.

ken lineage extending back to the Eighth century. He says that his family had a large volume detailing dPon-skya clan history until it was destroyed in the Chinese Cultural Revolution. The progenitor of the dPon-skya clan is thought to have been a yogi who emigrated from India to Tibet in ancient times. In trance, Pho-bo lha-dbang has declared that the full name of his clan is Khyung A-dkar dpon-skya (which seems to suggest that it is part of the Se-khyung proto-clan of Upper Tibet). He reports that members of his clan have special physical characteristics, such as pointed skulls and red in the irises of their eyes. Furthermore, he says that this clan is safe from hailstorms that kill livestock and damage property. In addition to *lha-pa*, there is a history of *sngags-pa* (lay religious adepts) in Pho-bo lha-dbang's family, particularly among his maternal clan, the Gye-pa.

Pho-bo lha-dbang maintains that from father to son, over many generations, the mountain gods have chosen members of his distinguished family to assume the demanding work of being their mouthpieces. Pho-bo lha-dbang can recite the names of nine generations of *lha-pa* that preceded him. Beginning with his father they are: dPa' bo mgon-po dbang-rgyal (died in Nepal, circa 1974, at the age of 87), dPa' bo bsod-nams, sGrub-rdzug, dPon-skya sangs-rgyas, mGo-dkar, sGrub-pa skyabs, Padma skyabs, Rig 'dzin skyabs, and the highly esteemed *lha-pa* known as Gu-ru skyabs. Among Pho-bo lha-dbang's seven children, his son Karma bkra-shis (born circa 1972) has been selected by the gods to carry on the family's profession. He is still undergoing initiation. There have also been *dpa' mo* (female spirit-mediums) in the dPon-skya clan. Pho-bo lha-dbang believes that he is a less adept practitioner than his father, and that he, in turn, was less adept than his father. Pho-bo lha-dbang states that his great-grandfather sGrub-rdzug was an even better practitioner. It is unclear what has caused this long-term decline in the lineage of spirit-mediumship, but according to Pho-bo lha-dbang, it is probably related to the general deterioration in the virtue of human beings.

Pho-bo lha-dbang shares that his father dPa' bo mgon-po dbang-rgyal was partly initiated in Glang-ma phug (the cave of the 'Bri-gung-pa hierarch 'Jig-rten gsum-mgon), located near Nam-ra. Pho-bo lha-dbang states that to practice as a spirit-medium, the Tibetan government had to certify his father. Pho-bo lha-dbang notes that from time to time, religious officials from Lhasa, accompanied by gNam-ru lay officers, would visit the district to test the authenticity of those claiming to be under the influence of various spirits. Those deemed

to be fakes or under demonic possession were not permitted to practice as *lha-pa*. Pho-bo lha-dbang relates the Tibetan government certification of his father as follows: at the time of dPa' bo mgon-po's examination, four lay officials and eight monks were convened. They made 100 dough balls, which were weighed so that they would all be exactly the same size. The names of demons, written on slips of paper, were concealed in 99 of the dough balls, and inside the remaining dough ball the name of a *lha* was hidden. After going into trance dPa' bo mgon-po took the tray with all the dough balls and quickly spilled out 98 of them. He revolved the tray with the remaining two balls until one jumped out into a bowl of water on the nearby altar and the other one fell to the floor. The *lha-pa* then covered the dough ball resting on the ground with the tray. Removing the tray, a local official named mKhas-lde'u tshe-rdo proceeded to open this dough ball which produced the name of a demon. One of the monks now reached over towards the dough ball in the bowl of water but was prevented from touching it by dPa' bo mgon-po, who struck his hand with a drum stick. The *lha-pa* retorted that this individual was not a fully ordained monk. This actually being the case, the monk paid his respects to the *lha-pa*. The dough ball was finally opened by the lama in charge of the examination committee and was found to contain the name of the *lha*, proving that dPa' bo mgon-po was possessed by authentic deities.[102] He was feted with many offerings as a reward for his successful completion of the test.

Pho-bo lha-dbang, the youngest of four brothers, states that he was first possessed (*lha-bzhugs*) at thirteen years of age. He observes that his older brothers were spared from possession and the concomitant distresses it causes. As often happens to neophytes, these visitations by the deities made the young Pho-bo lha-dbang ill, and help was sought to diagnose his condition. A rNying-ma lama from gTsang province named sNying-ri khri-chen determined that rather than an ordinary illness, Pho-bo lha-dbang was being possessed by deities and that gradually his health would improve as he became accustomed to their presence. The lama performed *khrus* (ablutions)

[102] In an analogous, albeit less dramatic initiation of a *lha-mo* in Ladakh, she proves her ability by correctly guessing that her *lha-pa* mentor was holding a single grain of rice concealed in his hand (Schenk 1993: 337).

for him with the effect of absolving sin and purifying the subtle channels. sNying-ri khri-chen also bestowed rTa-mgrin, Phyag-na rdo-rje and Bya-khyung *dbang* (deity empowerments) to facilitate his mediumistic activities. Pho-bo lha-dbang recalls that all through his adolescence, his father dPa' bo mgon-po would have them go into trance together so that he could become increasingly acquainted with the deities, and the way in which they used his senses and body. He did not make his first utterance under possession, however, until he was 23 years old. Unlike many other *lha-pa* initiations in Upper Tibet, no use was made of strings tied to the ring-fingers.

Pho-bo lha-dbang declares that his father, like the *lha-pa* who came before him, stressed the importance of leading a clean and pious life. As a prelude to his training, he had to carry out a minimum of one hundred thousand prostrations, one hundred thousand refuge prayers, one hundred thousand mandala offerings, Vajrasattva practice[103] and pilgrimage. Among the pilgrimages he undertook was a circumambulation of gNam-mtsho. Pho-bo lha-dbang believes that thirteen circuits of each sacred landform are required when making pilgrimage. Practicing in graveyards was also useful in strengthening his grasp on the deities. As well as abstaining from tobacco and alcohol, Pho-bo lha-dbang says that it is essential for him and his sons to conduct regular religious observances, especially *tshogs*[104] offerings to Gu-ru rin-po-che on the tenth and 15th of the lunar month, as well as on special occasions.

Pho-bo lha-dbang states that when he was around thirteen years of age, the 16th rGyal-ba karma-pa, Rig-pa'i rdo-rje, visited his homeland, and performed *khrus* and *rab-gnas* for him. This latter ceremony involved the *byin-brlabs* (blessings) of the lama and his tutelary deities. When he was around eighteen years of age, gNam-ru was also visited by the high lama Sa-skya khri 'dzin, who also deigned to carry out *rab-gnas* and *khrus* on his behalf. Pho-bo lha-dbang believes that these religious ceremonies helped to purify his body and mind, making him a fit vehicle for the deities. Once in Nepal, he remarks that he was afforded much spiritual help by His Eminence

[103] This tantric deity is for the purification of the mind. Vajrasattva practice includes the recitation of a 100 syllable mantra and visualizations. For more information see Beresford 1993.

[104] These are sacred cakes and other types of objects used as offerings when invoking deities.

bCo-brgyad khri-chen rin-po-che (born 1919). bCo-brgyad khri-chen rin-po-che positively identified the possessing deities as those of his father, namely; gNyan-chen thang-lha, rDo-rje rkyang-khra, rTa-rgo, Nam-ra, Dam-can mgar-ba nag-po and A-stag klu-mo. Although Pho-bo lha-dbang knew that the first deity to possess him was A-stag klu-mo, there was some uncertainty as to the identity of the mountain gods up to this point in time. bCo-brgyad khri-chen rin-po-che, the head of the Tshar-pa subsect, encouraged him to continue in his occupation as a *lha-pa* and not engage in ordinary work. The lama explained that many people would benefit from his practice. Since that time, Pho-bo lha-dbang declares that he has conducted many trance ceremonies, the exact number of which is uncertain.

Pho-bo lha-dbang has preserved a Buddhist legend regarding the origin of the Tibetan *lha-pa*: in the time before the Vajrayana master Gu-ru rin-po-che there were no *lha-pa* in Tibet. Tibetans defiled themselves with *dmar-mchod* (animal sacrifice) and therefore, were not fit receptacles for the deities. Thanks to Gu-ru rin-po-che this abhorrent practice was halted and in its place, he introduced *dkar-mchod* (offerings that do not rely on the taking of life). At this time Gu-ru rin-po-che made many offerings (including live animals) to Thang-lha and other major mountain deities, winning their favor. As a result, they were now amenable to helping the Tibetans like never before. When Gu-ru rin-po-che had completed binding the mountain deities to oaths, which would protect Buddhism and its adherents, he called upon King Khri-srong lde-btsan (755–797) to collect thirteen virtuous boys of thirteen good clans, each of whom was thirteen years of age. These youth were assembled at bSam-yas and blessed by Gu-ru rin-po-che. Under the Vajrayana master's guidance they were then instructed to attempt to be possessed by powerful imperial mountain god's such as Thang-lha, 'O-lde gung-rgyal and Yar-lha sham-po. Four out of the thirteen boys were successful in the task set out for them. These four became the first *lha-pa* of Tibet, and were called Zur-bzhi lha-pa (Four Corners Spirit-Mediums), the founding lineages of the tradition. The Zur-bzhi lha-pa were given *lha-chas* (divine costume and paraphernalia of spirit-mediums) by Gu-ru rin-po-che, and deputed to assist people through the mountain gods and other divinities. One of the first four mediums belonged to the dPon-skya clan. Another of them became the Nyungs-dkar lha-pa (Mustard Seed Spirit-Medium), of Nag-shod in 'Bri-ru county. According to Pho-bo lha-dbang, this lineage also remained unbroken until at least 1959. Pho-bo lha-dbang is uncertain what lineages

the other two members of the Zur-bzhi lha-pa spurred. He is also unclear about the relationship between spirit-mediums from other regions of Tibet and the Zur-bzhi lha-pa.

Pho-bo lha-dbang reports that Gu-ru rin-po-che and the 84 Grub-chen (Mahasiddha)[105] are the *yi-dam-lha* (tutelary deities) of the dPon-skya clan. He states that the trance ceremony is convened under the auspices of these figures and that they serve as its spiritual beacon, investing the practice of spirit-mediumship with religious authority and doctrinal legitimacy. All the activities of the possessing deities and their spirit helpers are managed and regulated by the *yi-dam-lha*. Pho-bo lha-dbang affirms that his main protectors, as well as those of his patients, are his *pha-mes-lha* (ancestral clan deities) dPal-ldan lha-mo and Gur-mgon (Protector of the Tent).[106] These protectors rule over the deities of the trance, and defend against demons interrupting the ceremony and hurting its participants. Pho-bo lha-dbang says that his gurus also have a vital protective and patronizing function during the trance. These are conceived of as including those who have blessed him, as well as the entire assembly of rNying-ma lineage lamas and other Buddhist lineage lamas. Pho-bo lha-dbang mentions that another group of deities that plays a crucial role in the trance ceremony are the female *mkha' 'gro*. They include the mKha' 'gro sde-lnga of the five directions, five colors and five attributes, as well as Gu-ru rin-po-che's two main consorts, Ye-shes mtsho-rgyal and Mandha-ra-ba. The *mkha' 'gro* are benefactresses who exercise a salutary influence on the proceedings of the séance and people involved in it. Along with the lamas and *yi-dam-lha*, they are the objects of tantric refuge, a prerequisite for any esoteric Tibetan Buddhist practice.

Pho-bo lha-dbang states that the capability to be possessed by a large repertoire of deities distinguishes the *lha-pa* of Upper Tibet[107] from the better known *sku-rten* spirit-mediums, who usually host one protective deity such as Pe-har. He is not very familiar with the appearance of his possessing deities or the intricacies of their retinues. He notes that he has no recollection of their activities or utterances while in trance. However, the deities do announce their identity,

[105] In the biographies of the 84 Grub-chen they have a close association with the *mkha' 'gro*, whom they rely on as wisdom-bearers.
[106] This form of mGon-po is described in Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, pp. 49–51.
[107] In practice however, the *lha-pa* usually have two or three favorite deities.

and after the ceremony is finished he is informed by family members about it, and the nature of the deity's work. Unlike his father, Pho-bo lha-dbang is illiterate, and he has passed down the invocatory texts relating to the deities of the trance he inherited from him to his son Karma bkra-shis. It is said that the various mountain deities heal both human and livestock diseases, but there are subtle distinctions in their functions. However, Pho-bo lha-dbang does not appear to know what they are, nor does he know in advance which mountain deity will appear in the trance ceremony.

Pho-bo lha-dbang relates that due to his clan's high standing and their religious way of life he, like his ancestors, is possessed by gNyan-chen thang-lha himself. This clearly distinguishes him from lesser *lha-pa* in Upper Tibet who are possessed by subsidiary forms of this mighty mountain god. According to family tradition, during the early days of their lineage Thang-lha and other mountain deities acted as servants for the dPon-skya clan *lha-pa*. Pho-bo lha-dbang refers to Thang-lha as a *yul-lha* (deity in charge of a locale), *pho-lha* (protective deity of males), *dgra-lha* (protective and fortune-bestowing deity), and *phugs-lha* (household protector). He envisions him in his pacific form as a white deity mounted on a white horse. In his right hand he holds a three-jointed *sba-lcag* (cane horsewhip) and in his left, a *mdung-dar dkar-po* (spear with triangular white ensign attached). There is also a dark-colored wrathful form of Thang-lha involved in exorcisms. rDo-rje rkyang-khra is said to have several manifestations depending on the work he is called to do. In his most common form he is a red-colored *btsan* deity holding a *rdo-rje* (ritual thunderbolt) in his right hand and a lasso in his left. He is clad in a red helmet and red armor and rides a *rkyang* (wild Tibetan ass) with a white nose and white hoofs. rTa-rgo and Nam-ra also have the typical appearance of *btsan* deities: fierce red warriors mounted on horseback brandishing weapons.

According to Pho-bo lha-dbang, A-stag klu-mo was a native of gNam-ru and one of its ancient rulers.[108] He notes that this goddess

[108] A fairly detailed account of A-stag klu-mo is found in the utterances of the renowned Ge-sar bard bSam-grub, which were recently published as *Byang bdud klu btsan. sGrung mkhan bsam grub kyis phab pa'i gling rje ge sar rgyal po'i sgrung*, compiled by Yang En Hung and rGyang 'khor tshe-phun, pp. 349–352. I was kindly given an early release of this work by rGyang 'khor tshe-phun, a Ge-sar specialist at the Tibet Academy of Social Sciences, Lhasa. The account of this warrior female and

is either a manifestation of dPal-ldan lha-mo or a member of her retinue. She is particularly beneficial in treating diseases caused by the *klu*. A-stag klu-mo is said to have both peaceful and wrathful manifestations, the former aspect being the more common possessing deity. In her pacific form, she is white in color and adorned in the jewelry typically worn by the woman of gNam-ru, the A-pha hor-mo. This ornamentation includes a colorful sash, and the silver, turquoise and coral ornaments extending over the head and back known as *lan-mjug* and *se-chung*. In her right hand she cradles a vase of the wealth (*nor-bum*) and long life (*tshe-bum*) type. The pacific aspect of A-stag klu-mo functions as a wealth and happiness-bestowing deity, and thus she is the deity often present in the *g.yang 'gugs* and nuptial rituals. In her wrathful form, A-stag klu-mo is a black or red-colored goddess in the guise of a warrior. She wears a helmet and armor, and wields a spear and bow. In her most common venatic form she is known as Du-ru[109] sman-mo ngo-nag, the destroyer of

huntress can be summed up as follows: Ri-bzhi (Four Mountains) A-stag klu-mo was appointed minister by King bDud-klu-btsan, and served as his *sgo-srung* (gate-keeper). She erected a *gur-khang* (shelter) of wild yak horns at sTag-lung ri-bkra na-thang (Tiger Valley Variegated Mountain Grasslands Plain). At A-yer mun-pa tshur-rup she built the stone castle of dawn. At Gong-shel g.yer nyi-ma'i rang-mdog she made the throne of the conch white lioness. She was given an iron saddle studded with blazing jewels, an iron bridle and an iron rear saddle-strap by bDud-klu-btsan, which she mounted on the horse Rag-dkar drel-ser (Tan Yellow Mule). This horse had flames spurting from its mouth and [ran] like a swirling hurricane wind. A-stag klu-mo had the *'khor-gsum* (bow and arrow and sword) and a rippling regimental banner. When she came from rDza-ri la-mgo bar-ma (Central Talus Mountain Pass) she first saw King Ge-sar. She threatened him with her bow and arrow, and commenced to interrogate him. In her song of the black *bdud* she honors the black *bdud* protector Ri-rtse kha-ba gnyan-chen thang-lha (Mountain Peak Snowy Great gNyan God of the Plain), the owner of treasures; and the lake of treasures gNam-mtsho-klu. In her song she also honors bTsan-rgod sha-za khrag 'thung (Wild bTsan Eater of Flesh Drinker of Blood). She asserts to Ge-sar that this upper land is the kingdom of bDud-klu-btsan. She tells Ge-sar that her birthplace is gNam-mtsho, and that she was born from the mother of *ku-sha* grass and the father of the rainbow of emptiness. She also tells Ge-sar, "I wear a soft costume with the seams sewn inside and that is why it cannot get wet in the summer nor can wind penetrate it in the winter. I killed a fox, tanned the skin and made clothes with it and I killed a wolf in the winter, tanned the skin and made clothes with it. I killed a wild yak and onager and ate their brains and fat. When I was five years old, I became the protector from wolves (shepherdess) for bDud-klu-btsan. When I was eight years old, I made a small bow of wild yak horn and a bamboo arrow with three joints and a sharp arrow point, and killed small wild yaks, gazelles and antelopes. I kill with relish and this is why I am called dPa' mo (Heroine)." For another account of bSam-grub's Ge-sar tales see Bellezza 2001, pp. 69–75.

[109] Du-ru is said to be the name of a locale in gNam-ru.

the *bdud 'brong* (wild yak demon). Pho-bo lha-dbang adds that in ancient times, the father of A-stag klu-mo, Ri-bzhi lha-dar, was gored to death by the black wild yak demon. As the father had no sons it was up to A-stag lha-mo to exact revenge. In her search for the demon she succeeded in killing every wild yak in gNam-ru except for one *be'u* (calf under one year old), which she kept with her. When the epic hero Gling ge-sar came to the area, he asked her why she had slaughtered all the wild yaks. A-stag klu-mo explained what had happened. Moved by her story, Ge-sar demonstrated that her pet calf was indeed the giant yak demon by inducing it to assume its true appearance. It appeared with her father's corpse impaled on its horns. Enraged, A-stag klu-mo tried to kill it with a barrage of arrows but was unable to do so. Ge-sar than killed it with one of his magical arrows. Most grateful, A-stag klu-mo became one of his military commanders in subsequent campaigns against other *bdud* demons.

According to Pho-bo lha-dbang, the *mo-lha rgyud* (lineage of female deities) is generally more powerful than the *pho-lha rgyud* (lineage of male deities). For example, gNam-mtsho phyug-mo and Dang-ra las kyi dbang-mo dominate over their respective mates Thang-lha and rTa-rgo.[110] Although the lake deities are said not to possess him, they are present during the trance ceremony as patronesses, and play an important role in the curative rites. Pho-bo lha-dbang cites that the preeminence of female deities is reflected in the fact that when he falls ill it is A-stag klu-mo who heals him.

Pho-bo lha-dbang reports that the mountain deities and A-stag lha-mo have similar sets of helping spirits who are responsible for removing *grib* and the performance of other remedial functions. The zoomorphic remedial spirits eliminate disease-causing impurities from the patient's body, such as the pernicious variety called *sa-btsog grib* (filthy earth contamination), which when left untreated kills a victim in seven days. This worm-like creature lives in the soil and attacks its victims by burrowing through their skin. Pho-bo lha-dbang lists his three main helping spirits of the possessing deities as Bya-khyung,[111]

[110] This belief in the dominance of female deities in the Byang-thang is an ancient one. For example, it is reflected in the Bon texts to Yum-sras, the goddess of gNam-mtsho and a form of Srid-pa'i rgyal-mo (Queen of Existence). For an analysis of these texts see Bellezza 1997, pp. 112–115, 132, 133 (fns. 42–45); Part Three, section viii, pp. 317–322.

[111] Same as the *khyung*, the horned eagle deity native to Upper Tibet.

rGya-stag (Big Tiger) and 'Jibs-spyang (Sucking Wolf). The ministrations of Bya-khyung are especially effective in cases of stroke, paralysis, and in diseases caused by the *klu* and *sa-bdag* such as arthritis. 'Jibs-spyang is a blue-colored wolf who is said to reside in gSang-ba dur-khrod (Secret Cemetery), in rDo-rje-gdan (Bodh Gaya), India. This spirit helper is especially effective in the cure of rabies and sinus problems. rGya-stag is useful in the removal of many types of *grib*.

Pho-bo lha-dbang alleges that until the time of his great-grandfather sGrub-rdzug, animals such as the *thang-dkar*, brown bear and *rkyang* were used as mounts by the dPon-skya *lha-pa*.[112] They are thought to have traveled around on them at will. Messengers coming from as far away as five or six days on horseback would seek help from sGrub-rdzug, on behalf of ailing relatives. sGrub-rdzug would tell people who had traveled for days that he would visit the patient the next morning. The messengers were justifiably incredulous but, come the next morning, a giant *thang-dkar* the size of a shepherd's black yak hair tent (*sbra-nag*), would appear at a nearby prayer flag mast and whisk sGrub-rdzug away.

In another tale about sGrub-rdzug told by his great-grandson, he was once approached by a *dge-bshes* (doctor of divinity) from one of Lhasa's three big dGe-lugs-pa monasteries during the time of the summer Dzam-gling spyi-bsang (Universal World Purification) festival. This individual had a strong desire to behold the protectress of Tibet, dPal-ldan lha-mo, and he wanted sGrub-rdzug to help him achieve his aspiration. sGrub-rdzug was very much against the idea, and he told the *dge-bshes* that neither of them would benefit from attempting such an extremely risky adventure. However, the *dge-bshes* continued to avail upon him until in the end he relented. Basins of tea, milk and beer numbering 200 were set out, and sGrub-rdzug went about making offerings to dPal-ldan lha-mo. This was followed by a trance lasting for three days and nights in which he invoked the goddess. Then, suddenly, the liquids in all the basins started to boil and soon evaporated away. At that point, rainbows appeared

[112] The use of wild animals as mounts and servants is a theme of great persistence, which in the Bon quasi-historical texts is traced to Zhang-zhung times. For some examples see Karmay 1972, pp. 45–49, 55; Bellezza 2000, pp. 56–58, 62, 63, 193.

and the legs of the mule mount of dPal-ldan lha-mo became manifest in the sky above the séance. Overcome by this sight, the *dge-bshes* dropped down dead.

As discussed above, the costume and accouterments of the *lha-pa*, the *lha-chas*,[113] are believed to have been bestowed upon the original four spirit-mediums by Gu-ru rin-po-che. Pho-bo lha-dbang was very fortunate in that he was able to bring many of his ritual implements and articles of clothing out of Tibet with him. Some of these objects have been in his family for many generations. His ceremonial dress includes the *stod-khebs*, three mantles worn over one another. Small bells called *g.yer-kha* are attached to the ends of the mantles. The *stod-khebs* have wide openings for the neck and cover the spirit-mediums chest. It is said to represent the dress of the *mkha' 'gro*. It is also thought to function as the *rten* (support) or temporary collection point for the *thugs 'od-zer* (radiant consciousness) of the deities involved in the trance.

On his head Pho-bo lha-dbang dons the *btsan-zhwa*, a peaked red brocade hat that he traces to Gu-ru drag-po, a fierce form of Guru rin-po-che that subdued demons and angry spirits. On the *btsan-zhwa* are three appliqué eyes with flaming eyebrows. Reportedly, the middle eye represents the *ye-shes spyan*, the all-seeing wisdom eye of Buddhist deities, and the two lateral eyes, the eyes of the mountain *btsan* deities as well as those of Gu-ru drag-po. The front of the hat is adorned with a small silver *tshe-bum* (long-life vase) talisman. Near the base of the hat is an ancient brass medallion in the form of the *nor-bu me 'bar* (flaming spiritual jewels) called *rigs-lnga 'babs-gdan*, the point on which the *rigs-lnga* headdress rests. Two red tassels (*zhwa-lung*), whose function is no longer clear, hang from each side of the hat. On the top of *the btsan-zhwa* there is a plume of *thang-dkar* (lammergeier) vulture feathers (*rgod-thul*). Pho-bo lha-dbang says that this sacred plume, now highly worn, was inherited from his father. He also observes that at the beginning of the trance ceremony the *rgod-thul* functions to herald the path to the *lha-pa* for the *yi-dam-lha* and high protective deities Gur-mgon and dPal-ldan lha-mo. He further believes that during the trance ceremony the *thugs 'od-zer* (called *'od-*

[113] This type of dress is also called *yul-lha-chas* and *btsan-chas*. For the types of costumes used by various Tibetan spirit-mediums see Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, pp. 410–414.

zer for short) of these deities collects in the plume, as does that of the possessing deity. Pho-bo lha-dbang states that this plume is the crown ornament of the *lha-chas*, reflecting the physical and symbolic heights attained by the lammergeier.[114]

Like other *lha-pa* of Upper Tibet, Pho-bo lha-dbang uses the *rigs-lnga* headdress. It is worn over the *btsan-zhwa*. He states that it represents the pact between the *lha-pa* and Buddhism, and is an affirmation of his reliance on the doctrines of this religion. He explains that the five lobes of the headdress contain images of the rGyal-ba rigs-lnga, the omniscient, omnipresent pentad of Buddhas responsible for helping all sentient beings of the universe. The rainbow-colored fan-like extensions attached to the *rigs-lnga* are called *snyan-gshog* (ear wings). Pho-bo lha-dbang affirms that the colored strips on the *snyan-gshog* represent rainbows, the form of light that the *'od-zer* of the deities assumes. Pho-bo lha-dbang maintains that at the start of the trance the *'od-zer* of the various deities comes to him from all sides and descends upon the *rigs-lnga* and *snyan-gshog*. During the trance these objects act as collection points for the *'od-zer*, which permeates the entire body of the *lha-pa*. Pho-bo lha-dbang notes that the outer margin of the *snyan-gshog* is white in color and is where the *'od-zer* of Buddhas, lineage lamas, and protectors Gur-mgon and dPal-ldan lha-mo assemble. The blue and green stripes are collection points for the *'od-zer* of the *mkha' 'gro* and A-stag klu-mo. The yellow stripes are for the *'od-zer* of the *gnyan* and Dam-can mgar-ba nag-po, and the red stripes are for the *'od-zer* of the *btsan*. The eye on each *snyan-gshog* is said to represent the eyes of Bya-khyung, and are also the

[114] The top of the *sgrung-zhwa*, the hat worn by Ge-sar bards, is also often decorated with a plume of *thang-dkar* feathers. It is generally thought that this plume acts as a *rlung-rta* (an ethereal substance that insures good luck) attracting device and a collection point for the host of *dgra-lha*. In a description of the *sgrung-zhwa* found in *Hor gling g.yul 'gyed* (volume *smad-cha*, p. 232) it states: "From the front, when the bird feathers shake, it is like a brown bear shaking its furry front quarters. From behind, when the bird feathers are smoothed down, it is like a lion shaking its turquoise mane. From straight ahead, when the bird feathers shake, it is like the exalted *gsas-mkhar* (castle of deities) on the mountain pass. When this hat is turned in profile it is like the *thang-dkar* gliding in the sky." (*bya sgro sngon la gsigs pa'i dus / dred mong ral pa gsig pa 'dra / bya sgro rgyab la bsnyal ba'i dus / seng ges g.yu ral sprugs pa 'dra / bya sgro thad la sprugs pa'i dus / la kha'i gsas mkhar bstod pa 'dra / zhwa 'di 'phred la khyer ba'i dus / thang dkar nam 'phang gcod pa 'dra /*). Similarly, the *dkar-mo rtse-zhwa*, the hat used by various Bon practitioners, has two pointed flaps said to represent a gliding *khyung*.

collection points for his *'od-zer*. Pho-bo lha-dbang claims that the eyes of Bya-khyung watch over him and prevent evil spirits and harmful forces from hurting him. As such, he believes that this deity has the most vital role of any of the helping spirits in the trance ceremony. A set of ribbons—white, blue, red, green and yellow in color—called the *snyan-dar*, hang from each side of the *rigs-lnga*. They are thought to be additional collection points for the *'od-zer* of the *mkha' 'gro*.

Pho-bo lha-dbang discloses that during the period of initiation, the dPon-skya *lha-pa* were not permitted to use the *btsan-zhwa* or *rigs-lnga* but instead had to wear the *ras-thod*, a white cotton turban. There were two types of *ras-thod*, depending on how much cloth was available. The smaller one is said to have been a piece of cloth folded into a triangle and tied around the head so that a flap pointed upwards. The other type of *ras-thod* consisted of a long strip of cloth wound around the head sufficient times so that in the center it was elevated high above the crown. This manner of turban was also worn by the early Tibetan kings, such as Srong-btsan sgam-po, as well as by the mountain god gNyan-chen thang-lha. Pho-bo lha-dbang traces the use of the *ras-thod* back to the *grub-chen* adepts of India who also used turbans.[115] Its use is said to facilitate the advent of pacific deities, which are much easier for a neophyte *lha-pa* to cope with.

Although Pho-bo lha-dbang cut his hair some years ago, he notes that it is customary for *lha-pa* to wear their hair long. Two styles of hair called *sngags-skra* are acceptable for the *lha-pa* vocation. He asserts that these are derived from Gu-ru rin-po-che, who wore his hair in the same fashion as the lay religious practitioners known as *sngags-pa*. One style involves tying the hair in a single braid and binding it with either a red or white string. The braid hangs loose over the back. Pho-bo lha-dbang adds that unlike the coiffure popular among

[115] The Na-khi *lla-bu* (spirit-mediums) of the southeastern fringe of the Tibetan plateau also wear a turban but it is red in color (Rock 1952: 101, 102, plate xxvii). Red silk turbans were also worn in Tibet by oracles possessed by *btsan* deities (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 413), white turbans by the *lha-pa* of sPi-ti, and red and white turbans by certain Bon practitioners. Similar turbans (*'gying-thod*) are used by deities of Zhang-zhung origin, and by the ancient Bon *gshen* and *dpon-gsas* (priests), as well as the Tibetan kings of early times. I therefore, think it likely that before the adoption of the Buddhist *rigs-lnga* headdress, the *lha-pa* of Upper Tibet primarily used a turban.

shepherds in Upper Tibet, there is no bang in this hairstyle. The other *sngags-spra* consists of wearing the hair bound in a topknot (*thor-cog*). Pho-bo lha-dbang mentions that until the time of his father, a *rdo-rje* and a *glegs-bam* (small object containing a sacred text) were tied into the topknot.

Pho-bo lha-dbang upholds that the main implements to invoke the deities of the trance ceremony, as well as being instruments used in healing rites, are the *gshang* and *ḍa-ma-ru*. The bronze *gshang* is used to signal the *mkha' 'gro* and other deities to come and attend the ceremony. Pho-bo lha-dbang believes that its sound is pleasing to the deities, but that it also functions to eliminate *gnod-pa* (harm) and to subdue *bgegs* (negative forces and obstructions often in the form of evil spirits). The *gshang* is also used to suck out disease-causing *grib* from the patients' body. Pho-bo lha-dbang recounts that in the time of his great great-grandfather, dPon-skya sangs-rgyas, it was also used as a surgical tool in operations on the head and body of patients, in order to extricate hard-to-reach *grib*. Pho-bo lha-dbang further recounts that in the time of his grandfather dPa' bo bsod-nams, a livestock epidemic struck the g.Yag-pa region,[116] killing many animals. During this epidemic, a family called dPa' bo bsod-nams to their residence in order to rescue their ailing herd of some 40 or 50 yaks. He went into trance and with the *dar 'phan* (cloth streamers) of his *gshang* he decapitated a yak with one fell swoop. The *lha-pa* then proceeded to hit all the other yaks in the herd with the yak head. When he finished, dPa' bo bsod-nams flung the decapitated yak head some distance away with his sling. Through these activities all the remaining yaks were cured.

Pho-bo lha-dbang employs the *ḍa-ma-ru* at the beginning of the ceremony to call the deities of the trance, and it is said to be very effective in summoning the helping spirits. The *ḍa-ma-ru* used by Pho-bo lha-dbang has snakeskin drum heads and is empowered with secret mantras written inside the body of the drum. Pho-bo lha-dbang divulges that the snakeskin covering the drum indicates a practitioner of high merit, and is efficacious in curing diseases attributed

[116] Group of 60 confederated camps known as g.Yag-pa phru-ma drug-bcu, which belonged to the estate of the Paṇ-chen lamas. g.Yag-pa thar-ma, centered near the Thar-ma gtsang-po (presently Thar-ma township, Shan-rtsa county), was one division. Other divisions included g.Yag-pa go-pa (gZhung-med township, Shan-rtsa county) and g.Yag-pa grum-bu (Grum-pa township, Shan-rtsa county).

to the *klu* and *sa-bdag*. The *ḍa-ma-ru* is also employed to suck out impurities from the body of patients. Pho-bo lha-dbang discloses that at one time, the dPon-skya *lha-pa* also attached the flayed skin of a deceased eight-year-old girl on their *ḍa-ma-ru*. It is believed that this powerful article helped to rid patients of evil influences. Pho-bo lha-dbang also plays the *rnga-chen* (large hanging drum) to summon deities. It too is empowered inside with secret mantras. Like the *gshang*, the drums subdue evil beings and influences. Another deity-signaling device is the *dung* (conch); however, it is not used once the *lha-pa* is in trance. Pho-bo lha-dbang recalls that in certain instances the possessing deities resort to a long *kha-btags* (white scarf) or ribbons of various colors to suck out *grib*.

The efficacy of the *'jibs* (sucking) method of healing plays a role in another tale, set in the time of sGrub-rdzug, which must have occurred sometime in the middle of the 19th century. Pho-bo lha-dbang relates the story as follows: sGrub-rdzug had two children dPa' bo bsod-nams, and a daughter who was an especially proficient *lha-mo* or *dpa' mo*. Her abilities were widely acknowledged in the seven Sa-skya camps of what is now part of dPal-mgon county. However, the Tibetan government took a dim view of a young woman doing such work; the family's large collection of ritual implements were consequently seized and taken to Lhasa. In a bid to have them returned, dPa' bo bsod-nams and his sister traveled to Lhasa. dPa' bo bsod-nams was informed by government officials that he could return to northern Tibet and practice as a spirit-medium, and some of the family's basic ritual equipment was returned to him. His sister however, was thrown in jail. Not much later, 32 of the horses belonging to the Dalai Lama were bitten by a rabid dog. dPa' bo bsod-nams approached a government minister on behalf of his sister and explained that she could save the horses. His sister was released from jail and given back her ritual implements. She was taken to where the horses were corralled (presumably the *chibs-ra* in Zhol village). Once in trance, she hurdled herself in one leap over the very high wall of the corral in which the sick horses were kept. She went on with the business of sucking the disease-causing impurity from all the horses; when she was finished she jumped out of the corral in the same manner as she had entered it. Her treatment proved successful and the Dalai Lama's horses were cured. So impressed with her services were government officials that not only was she given all her property back, but was granted a house in

sKas-gdung[117] and a stipend as well. She became known in Lhasa as the sKas-gdung sku-rten. Although she married, she did not have any children.

Like other *lha-pa* of Upper Tibet, Pho-bo lha-bang uses three copper alloy *me-long* set on his altar. The largest of these he calls the *phyi-gling* (outer world), which is placed on the middle level of the altar. The *phyi-gling* is said to be a microcosm of the *srid-pa-gsum* (the three vertically-oriented spheres of the universe) in which all six orders of sentient beings reside. Pho-bo lha-dbang tells that when they appear in the mirror they are watched and protected by the Buddhas, *yi-dam-lha* and the lineage lamas of all four schools of Buddhism. The middle-sized *bar-gling* (middle world) sits on an upper tier of the altar. It is said to function as the assembly point of the *bka' srung* (protectors of the Buddhist teachings), which includes the deities of the trance and their retinues of helping spirits. Pho-bo lha-dbang states that when a helping deity is called on, the possessing deity retreats to the *bar-gling* to permit its movement from the mirror to him. Important *klu* and *klu-mo* are also thought to reside in the *bar-gling* and when needed for a healing function, can be ordered by the possessing deities. However, Pho-bo lha-dbang believes that the water spirits do not enter him but rather carry out their work from outside. Lesser *klu* and *klu-mo* reside in the *phyi-gling* with all other living beings. The *bka' srung* are presided over by Gur-mgon and dPal-ldan lha-mo, aspects of which also reside in the *bar-gling*. The small *nang-gling* (inner world) is erected on the upper-most tier of the altar. It is said to serve as the collection point for a parcel of the radiant consciousness of the Buddhas, rNying-ma lineage lamas and other gurus of Pho-bo lha-dbang.

Pho-bo lha-dbang wears a silver mirror embossed with the mystic syllable *hri* on his chest. Called *dam-gsal me-long* (pure resplendent mirror),[118] it is reported to be the place where the possessing deity resides during the trance. The radiant consciousness of the deity is seen as being on and behind the mirror, as well as inside the *lha-pa*'s body. The *lha-pa* also wears a small *me-long* on the ring finger

[117] sKas-gdung khang-gsar is a small quarter of old Lhasa located immediately north of the Bar-skor.

[118] My research indicates that female spirit-mediums in southern Tibet (*dpa' mo*), such as those who channel rDo-rje g.yu-sgron-ma inside their bodies, wear the similar *thugs-gsal me-long* (resplendent mind mirror) over their chests.

of the left hand. Pho-bo lha-dbang alleges that during the trance it contains a parcel of the possessing deity's *'od-zer*, and is used to help eradicate evil spirits and inimical influences. In the past, dPon-skya spirit-mediums are said to have attached a *me-long* known as *ye-shes spyan* (wisdom eye) to their foreheads as a collection point for the *'od-zer* of the tutelary deities. Another *me-long* was worn over the abdomen, and functioned to protect the dPon-skya *lha-pa* from interference originating with spirits dwelling in the subterranean realm.

Pho-bo lha-dbang calls the *kha-ṭam rtse-gsum* (trident) an attribute of Gu-ru rin-po-che, and sees it as another apotropaic instrument found in the trance ceremony. It is thought to exert a protective influence over the proceedings. In Tibet, the dPon-skya *lha-pa* owned a sword, which was efficacious in cases where a patient was infected with the deadly contamination known as *sa-btsog*. It is said to have also been useful when a patient lived a long distance away and was unable to visit the spirit-medium. The dPon-skya *lha-pa*, by wielding the sword during the trance, could remove *grib* from afar.[119]

Pho-bo lha-dbang recounts the following story connected to the sword, which is said to have occurred in the time of his grandfather: dPa' bo bsod-nams had a friend named Bram-ze who was also a *lha-pa*, albeit of lesser ability. After failing to help his own mother when she became very ill, Bram-ze requested the assistance of dPa' bo bsod-nams. In order to cure her, dPa' bo bsod-nams was possessed by one of his deities. During the trance, Bram-ze pulled the *rigs-lnga* off of his head in jest. This enraged the possessing deity and he took the sword displayed at the ceremony and ran it straight through the heart of Bram-ze. Bram-ze immediately collapsed and it was believed by those present that he was dead. Later, when he recovered, Bram-ze related that he was actually fully conscious but unable to move. He was not in pain but felt very cold inside. After impaling his friend, dPa' bo bsod-nams went on to cure Bram-ze's mother. Afterwards, Bram-ze's father begged the *lha-pa* to heal his son as well. The deity possessing dPa' bo bsod-nams agreed but only if Bram-ze's family would make a *ma-ṇi* wall and place stones on it

[119] The *gurtum* mediums of the rGya-hor ethnic group beat their patients with swords in order to cure them. The sword was also used as a divination instrument by spirit-mediums in rDza-yul, in Khams. See Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, pp. 441, 443.

inscribed with the sutra collections *rDo rje gcod pa* and *mDo thar pa chen po*. Having promised to do so, dPa' bo bsod-nams pulled the sword out of Bram-ze's body, and took butter from a *tshogs* offering on the altar and spread it on the wounds where the sword had entered and exited his body. On the sword was a little bit of blood from Bram-ze's heart. dPa' bo bsod-nams than sprinkled *yon-chab* (sanctified water) on the wounds. Bram-ze was fully revived but he carried the scars for the rest of his life.

Most trance ceremonies are held in the patient's residence but they can also be conducted at Pho-bo lha-dbang's residence (which in Tibet was a tent). Pho-bo lha-dbang states that in order to erect the altar, the site must be cleared of negative spirits and influences. This is done by placing a *par-shing* (wood block relief image) under the center of the site. The *par-shing* is carved with the *srid-pa ho*, the protective cosmic astrological cycle.[120] The table used for the altar is covered with a *gzhi-khebs* (a piece of felt or cotton cloth). A white *gzhi-khebs* decorated with the *rdo-rje rgya-gram* (crossed thunderbolts) in the center and *padma 'dab-brgyad* (eight-petal lotus) on each of the four corners, is used in trance ceremonies that call for pacific deities. Barleycorn is sprinkled on this *gzhi-khebs* in the form of a swastika, wish-fulfilling gems and flaming jewels. Pho-bo lha-dbang remarks that another type of *gzhi-khebs* is multi-colored and is used in ceremonies in which wrathful deities are demanded. On this *gzhi-khebs* barleycorn is randomly scattered. A third kind *gzhi-khebs* is for use with both types of deities.

On the large lower level of the altar an array of offerings are set out for the deities of the trance. These include three water bowls that contain saffron, one or more bowls of rice and barleycorn, flowers, cloth of five colors, a conch, a small vessel of tea, a metal skull-cup of tea, a small vessel of milk, a butter lamp, one or more vessels with incense, *chang* (beer), and *sman-gtor* (conical cake offerings with medicinal ingredients). Other objects placed on the lower tier of the altar include a *rdo-rje* and a *las-phur* (activity dagger), which are used by possessing deities to eliminate evil spirits and influences

[120] The *srid-pa ho* features the *sme-ba-dgu*, the numerals one to nine, which symbolize all of phenomenal existence in Tibetan astrology (Norbu 1995: 153–155). Another important element of the *srid-pa ho* is sPyi-rus-sbal (Universal Tortoise), a wrathful manifestation of the god of wisdom 'Jam-dpal-dbyangs, on which the cosmos rests.

afflicting patients. When in use, the *rdo-rje* is placed on the patient's head, shoulders, chest and back. On the *las-phur* black and red cloths called *phur-dar* are fastened. Pho-bo lha-dbang uses the *phur-dar* to summon the demon or harming force afflicting the patient. Once the demon appears, it is struck with the head of the *las-phur*, which causes it to lose its grasp on the patient and flee. In trances specially held for the wrathful deities, additional offerings include a basin of tea, a basin of beer, red *bshos-bu* (edible sacred sculptures), and the *zangs-gling*, a small copper horn used to call the deities participating in the ceremony.

On the small second tier of the altar is the *phyi-gling*, which is stood up in a bowl of *rtsam-pa* (parched barley meal). The *rtsam-pa* is sculpted in three layers, which are said to symbolize the three spheres of the universe. On the rim of the bowl four dabs of butter are placed, which according to Pho-bo lha-dbang, symbolize all good offerings in quantities as great as the world mountain Ri-rab lhun-po. Beside the *phyi-gling* there is a small vessel of *sman-rak*[121] and photographs of the 17th Karma-pa and the bCo-brgyad khri-chen rin-po-che. On the third tier of the altar the *bar-gling* is erected, and on the fourth or upper tier, the *nang-gling*, in the same types of container as the *phyi-gling*. The positions of the *gling* are said to reflect the hierarchical positions of the deities they host. In the vessel with the *nang-gling* there is a stand of photographs of the Gu-ru mtshan-brgyad (Eight Manifestations of Gu-ru Rin-po-che), and in the vessel with the *bar-gling* images of sGrol-ljang (Green Tara) and the historic Buddha. Of course, until the modern period, photographs of deities were not available, and *thang-kha* (religious paintings) were used instead. Two *thang-kha* that had been in Pho-bo lha-dbang's family for many generations hang above the altar. They feature the 80 Grub-chen and Gu-ru rin-po-che's paradise, Zangs-mdog dpal-ri.

After the altar is set up, Pho-bo lha-dbang dons his costume. He is then ready to begin the trance. He recites *gsol 'debs* (prayers) in honor of Gu-ru rin-po-che and the 80 Grub-chen while he plays the *gshang* and *ḍa-ma-ru*. This alone is enough to send him into trance; there is no need of lengthy invocations to the mountain deities or

[121] A preparation of blood derived from animals that died of natural causes mixed with medicinal ingredients.

A-stag lha-mo. First, it is believed that the *'od-zer* of the higher deities such as the *yi-dam-lha*, Gur-mgon, dPal-ldan lha-mo and the *mkha' 'gro* take up their respective positions in the *me-long* and on the *lha-pa*'s body. This facilitates the arrival of the possessing deity and his retinue. Pho-bo lha-dbang alleges that at the moment of *lha-bzhugs* (possession), the possessing deity's radiant consciousness envelops him in rainbow light. It is said to enter him via the top of his head—except for the very crown of the skull. This mode of entry is said to distinguish the dPon-skya *lha-pa* from lesser spirit-mediums, which rely on the ring fingers for access. Pho-bo lha-dbang describes that just before the moment of possession, he is immobilized and tingles inside. Also, ahead of his consciousness being displaced it seems as though everything in his field of vision has become very distant. It is reported that during the possession, the *'od-zer* of the possessing deity occupies any of the 80 *rtsa* (subtle energy channels) of the body, as well as points on the headdress, costume, *dam-gsal me-long*, and the hairs of the body.

As for the *rnam-shes* (consciousness) of Pho-bo lha-dbang, he believes that at the instant of possession it is transferred to the protective auspices of Gu-ru rin-po-che. He envisions that somehow it is conveyed to the heart of this deity for safekeeping. Once in trance, Pho-bo lha-dbang usually conducts various healing rites. He does not carry out divination rituals but on some occasions the possessing deity will utter pronouncements regarding the fate of the patient and the success of future endeavors. The cause of the illness or misfortune besetting the patient is also revealed by the possessing deity. The deity usually speaks in the Tibetan language but it can also communicate in *lha-skad* (language of the gods), which is said to sometimes sound like an Indian dialect. When the helping spirits are ordered to take possession of the *lha-pa*'s body he will often act like the animal form with which it is endowed.

Pho-bo lha-dbang states that remuneration for his services varies according to the means and inclination of the patients and clients. He says that those of modest means make small offerings, and the indigent are treated for free, with no expectation of anything in return. On the other hand, the wealthy sometimes left the dPon-skya *lha-pa* offerings of gold and silver. Typically, payment was made in cloth, grain, livestock, and other commodities.

On the personal altar of Pho-bo lha-dbang and ones used by his ancestors is a vessel full of barleycorn in which the family *mda' dar*

is erected. This arrow is adorned with ribbons of five colors, three eagle or lammergeier feathers, a small *'ur-rdo chu-mig dgu-sgril* (sling made of nine braids with 'eye' markings of the *dgra-lha*), a small *me-long*, and pieces of turquoise, coral and cowry shells. Fastened to the end is an ancient arrowhead of the *thog-lcags* (primordial metal) class. Along with the *lha-tshogs phur-pa* (deity assembly dagger), which is stood up in the same vessel, the *mda 'dar* is reported to be the *rten* (support/residence) for the household deities *pho-lha, pha-mes-lha*, etc. Pho-bo lha-dbang relates that in Tibet the family also had a *mdung-dar* (spear with a red and white flag), which had a similar function.[122] While riding on horseback it was held erect by anchoring it to a stirrup. The *mda' dar* is also used in *g.yang 'gugs* (fortune-attracting ritual) conducted by Pho-bo lha-dbang for patients who have had their *phywa-g.yang* (fortune potential) diminished. Such a condition is said to often manifest itself in a string of unfortunate events such as loss of livestock and family illness. The *g.yang 'gugs* is usually presided over by pacific forms of Thang-lha and A-stag lha-mo. Pho-bo lha-dbang says that in this ritual he waves his *mda' dar* while murmuring prayers; this functions to call back the patient's fortune potential.

Another ritual that depends on peaceful possessing deities is the *lha-sgrig klu-sgrig* (ordering the *lha* and *klu*). As is commonly held, Pho-bo lha-dbang says that each individual and family has its own protective deities (*phugs-lha, pho-lha, mo-lha*, etc.). He believes that when a couple enters into a matrimonial alliance it must be insured that these deities harmonize with one another lest the marriage be plagued with discord and unhappiness. Pho-bo lha-dbang says that after the marriage is finalized, couples would come to the dPon-skya *lha-pa* so that their disparate family and personal protectors could be reconciled with one another. During the trance, the possessing deity is thought to rearrange the hierarchical order of these protectors. To carry out the *lha-sgrig klu-sgrig*, the bride and groom in all their finery come before Pho-bo lha-dbang and his possessing deity. They stand on a white felt mat (*phying-dkar*) decorated with painted or barley corn motifs including *g.yung-drung lag-sbrel* (interconnected swastikas)

[122] The *btsan-mdung*, a lance with a red triangular ensign fastened to it, was used by Tibetan spirit-mediums that were possessed by *btsan*. A *mdung-dar* known as a *rten-mdung* was also used in the trance ceremony by spirit-mediums. See Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, pp. 414, 415.

nor-bu me 'bar (flaming jewels), *nor-bu bskang-skyid* (wish fulfilling jewels) and the eight auspicious symbols.[123] The bride holds a *mda' dar* with a *kha-btags* decorated with the eight auspicious symbols, which is tied to her right hand, and a bowl of *phye-mar* (parched barley meal and butter) in her left hand. The groom also holds a *mda' dar* in his right hand and bowl of *phye-mar* in his left. Pho-bo lha-dbang observes that these objects serve as offerings and as supports for their personal deities, and help to attract happiness and long life to the couple. He then places a white *kha-btags* over the shoulders of the couple thereby effecting a reordering of the deities.

Pho-bo lha-dbang states that another method of bringing prosperity to a client and his or her household entails the consecration of selected livestock and the dedication of these animals to the personal deities and other protectors. This is carried out to insure that the herds are sufficiently protected from all threats, to increase milk production, and to enhance the survival rate of young animals. He says that whilst in trance, he scatters barleycorn and sprinkles *khrus-chu* on the chosen animals, and intones prayers thus making them a fit vehicle for the deities. Once the animals are so sanctified, they remain the property of the deities for the rest of their lives. It is thought that the radiant consciousness of the deities resides in and around the animals, exerting a salubrious influence over the entire herd. Only highly-prized animals with certain colors and markings are chosen for this ritual procedure. Pho-bo lha-dbang notes that yaks thus selected are called *zhol-po*, and sheep *don-po*. After the consecration ritual, their owners ornament the animals singled out in a prescribed manner. This includes fastening *ras sna-lnga* (cotton cloth of five colors) on their backs and tails, making linear designs in red ochre on their backs, and dabbing butter on their horns. Pho-bo lha-dbang articulates that yaks and sheep (which must have erect spiraling horns) dedicated to Thang-lha and the *pho-lha* are all white in color, and are anointed with butter in a particular fashion. Dabs of butter are put on each corner of their mouth, on top of their heads, and on the tips of their horns. He says that yaks and sheep dedicated to the *mgon-po* must be all black in color (*rog-po*); yaks for

[123] *bKra-shis rtags-brgyad*. A white umbrella (*gdugs dkar-ma*), a vase (*bum-pa*), a wheel (*'khor-lo*), a pair of golden fish (*gser-nya*), a conch (*dung-dkar*), a lotus (*pad-ma*), an endless knot (*dpal-be'u*), and a victory banner (*rgyal-mtshan*).

the *btsan* are reddish in color, while the sheep of the *btsan* have white bodies and a red face (*dmar-rtsa*). Dam-can mgar-ba nag-po requires a bay-colored (*kham-pa*) yak with crossed horns. Female yaks (*'bri*) and sheep of a bluish color (*sngon-mo*) are dedicated to the *klu-mo* and *mo-lha*.

Pho-bo lha-dbang states that the *bla 'gugs* or *tshe 'gugs*[124] is a ritual designed to order back an errant *bla* (soul). He cautions that soul loss is a very serious condition and can lead to the death of the patient. He believes that victims of soul loss suffer from a steadily deteriorating mental and physical state. The *bla 'gugs* used by Pho-bo lha-dbang relies on recalling the lost soul through the use of a butter sculpture (*bla-gzugs*) in the form of a sheep. The *bla-gzugs* is allowed to float in a basin containing milk and water, the *bla-mtsho* (soul lake). According to Pho-bo lha-dbang, all Tibetans at one time had soul lakes; the basin and its contents now act as a substitute. Once he is possessed by his deities, the *lha-pa* uses his *mda' dar* to rotate the *bla-gzugs* in the basin of liquid while he entreats the soul to return to the patient. The sculpture of the sheep is then allowed to float freely until it comes to rest. Pho-bo lha-dbang expresses that the direction in which the head of the sheep points is an indication of the efficacy of the ritual; if it faces the patient this is a sign that his or her soul has returned. If the sheep's head points to the altar this is a sign for the *lha-pa* to chant more prayers, as the soul has not fully resettled itself in the patient. If the sheep's head faces Pho-bo lha-dbang, the position of the soul in the body of the patient is even more tenuous; many additional prayers are required to secure it. If the sheep's head points in any other direction it means the ritual has been unsuccessful and that it must be repeated.

Pho-bo lha-dbang states that until his father's time, the *bla 'gugs* ritual was practiced very differently. A patient suffering from soul loss would come to the trance ceremony dressed in his or her finest clothes and ornaments. He or she also had to bring a *bla-gnas* (soul receptacle) in the form of a piece of *g.yu drug-dkar* (a high quality

[124] The analogous ritual conducted by clerical and lay religious practitioners is called *bla-bslu* (repurchase of the *bla*). This is the kind of ritual now practiced by Pho-bo lha-dbang. The *bla 'gugs* (the ordering back of the soul by the possessing deity) of the earlier dPon-skya *lha-pa* is usually an integral component of the *bla-bslu*. For a description of the *bla-bslu* rituals see Karmay 1998, pp. 310–339.

turquoise)[125] and two pieces of good coral. A *khro* (an iron alloy) basin decorated with the eight auspicious symbols was filled with milk and water. It was then covered with different colored pieces of cloth and sealed with a string. The milk and water represented the *bla-mtsho* of the patient; the *khro* vessel, the earth; and the eight auspicious symbols, the friends of the soul. Whilst in trance the *lha-pa* would take the *bla-gnas* and thoroughly clean the stones in order that they might be a fit vehicle for the return of the soul. He then arranged them on a white string with the piece of turquoise in the middle. Taking his sling he hollowed out a piece of *spag* (barley meal dough) and placed the *bla-gnas* inside it. The *lha-pa* would then send a youth born in the year of the Tiger—24 years of age or younger—with the dough ball containing the *bla-gnas* and his sling outside the tent, specifying both the direction and distance he should go in. This youth had to be of good virtue and from a good clan. He carried a sword and wore a hat with four corners called *tshe-ring skyin-khebs*. After reaching the stipulated location he said a prayer to Gu-ru rin-po-che and hurled the dough ball as far as he could with the sling. Pho-bo lha-dbang maintains that the possessing deity, such as Thang-lha, under the direction of Gu-ru rin-po-che, would then retrieve the soul and bring it back to the *bla-gnas*. He further alleges that soon thereafter, when the vessel holding the *bla-mtsho* was opened, the patient or his or her representative would miraculously find the *bla-gnas* inside. If the *bla-gnas* was not returned to the *bla-mtsho*, the entire procedure would be carried out a second and even a third time if necessary.

In addition to sucking out *grib*, the deities that possess Pho-bo lha-dbang rely on several other remedial procedures. This includes blowing on the patient with air that contains *sngags* (spells) uttered by the *lha-pa*. Pho-bo lha-dbang says that this blowing technique and the application of spells is also used by the possessing deity to empower and bless knotted cords (*srung-mdud/srung-ba*) and other items. He believes that these articles serve to protect clients from misfortune, prevent the spread of contagious diseases and attack by demons. If a client specifically requests that preventive measures be taken the *srung-mdud* are spun before the start of the trance ceremony. They

[125] According to the *'Dri med shel phreng*, a brilliant blue and white turquoise, which can be seen in the dark (Karmay 1998: 384, fn. 34).

can also be made by the *lha-pa* during the trance if the possessing deity calls for them.

Pho-bo lha-dbang states that *srung-mdud* for general use have three, five or nine knots. They are spun from white wool coming from the right withers of a live white sheep, or the left withers of a live black sheep. It is important that the animals be completely white or black. The prepared cords are given to clients to tie around their necks. They are also said to be fastened to the mane of horses, and the backs of yaks, sheep and goats. Reportedly, white *srung-mdud* are usually for long life, the benefit of the mind and other peaceful modalities. Black *srung-mdud* function to forestall harm and evil. A *srung-mdud* plaited from black and white wool obtained from slaughtered sheep and tied with nine knots is effective in arthritis. It is tied around the afflicted joint. A red cotton cord called *skyur-srung* is prepared for animals that have miscarried or lost their young shortly after birth. It is tied to the tail of the animals, and is said to substantially increase the survival rate of their offspring. Pho-bo lha-dbang relates that an especially potent charm called *'gog-srung* (prevention protection) is prepared from black and white wool plaited together, seven black peas and an owl feather. It is used to prevent the spread of livestock epidemics. The peas, sewn into a white cotton pouch, and owl feather, are attached to the cord. The *'gog-srung* is empowered by the possessing deity through the use of black juniper smoke and spells. It is then tied to the withers of the lead animal of the herd. It is important that this animal has well-formed, intact ears and horns. Pho-bo lha-dbang believes that a single application of the *'gog-srung* is sufficient to protect the entire herd. Pho-bo lha-dbang considers a *srung-mdud* made from the hair of a brown bear effective in warding off diseases caused by the female *'dre* (demons). It is usually hung above the entrance to the tent. A *srung-mdud* of camel hair is also hung above the entrance. It is said to be effective protection against all classes of diseases and demons. A *srung-mdud* spun from wild yak hair is tied to both people and animals to prevent them from being struck by lightning. It is also hung above the threshold of the tent for the same purpose. Pho-bo lha-dbang shares that black and white feathers from a falcon (*khra-dkar*) are empowered by deities in the same way as the *srung-mdud*. They are suspended above the entrance of the tent to prevent diseases caused by envious neighbors.

Pho-bo lha-dbang affirms that a curative ritual called *lha-gsol*, which uses copious amounts of *shug-pa* (juniper), *tsan-dan* (sandalwood), *spos-dkar* (*Shorea robusta*), *A-ga-ru* (*Aquilaria*), and other types of incense, cleanses patients of impurities. He says that incense is also used in the *lha-gsol* to purify deities implicated in a patient's illness. Pho-bo lha-dbang believes that through non-virtuous activities, the personal deities (such as the *phugs-lha, yul-lha, dgra-lha* and *pho-lha*) and other divinities like the lake and mountain spirits can become sullied, thus causing physical and mental ailments. It then becomes necessary to restore the balance between individuals and their protective deities using the healing agency of aromatic substances. Incense also functions as a kind of remuneration to the deities, inclining them to help the patient. Pho-bo lha-dbang avers that these deities regulate an individual's power and abilities (*nus-pa*), therefore it is essential that they are in concord. During the *lha-gsol*, the patient or his representative makes offerings while invoking the deities with the sacred syllable *bswo* repeated again and again. Pho-bo lha-dbang says his main role is to play his musical instruments and direct the proceedings. Another component of the *lha-gsol* is the offering of tea, milk and beer to the deities. At the behest of the *lha-pa*, these offerings are tossed outside the tent by the patient or his representative. Pho-bo lha-dbang relates that in the past, wealthy patients sometimes offered silver and gold dust to burn with the incense, or to use in the *gser-skyems* (libations). The *lha-gsol* ritual is also employed in trance by Pho-bo lha-dbang to gain the favor of a client's personal deities in matters of travel and business. He states that during the trance ceremony, *lha-gsol* can constitute the main activity or be held in an abbreviated form (*bsdus-pa*) in conjunction with other restorative rituals.

Pho-bo lha-dbang reports that lustration of patients and personal deities can also be carried out using *khrus-chu* (lustral water). When this method is used, Pho-bo lha-dbang sprinkles his patients and the site of the ceremony with *khrus-chu*, consisting of water mixed with saffron and milk. This remedial procedure is reputed to remove disease and misfortune causing impurities. Ordinarily, *khrus-chu* is sprinkled using peacock feathers, a *rdo-rje*, or *ku-sha* grass. However, for certain types of *grib* a parrot feather is used instead. Pho-bo lha-dbang states that enticement rituals known as *mdos* (see Part Three, section iii, pp. 243–248) were also used by the dPon-skya *lha-pa*, as they are by other types of religious practitioners.

According to Pho-bo lha-dbang, a common method of eradicating ailments caused by evil spirits or negative influences involves the use

of mustard seeds, *gu-gul* (*Commiphora mukul*, an aromatic medicinal resin) and *shug-nag* (black juniper), which are empowered with spells by the possessing deity. These substances are burnt in a small censer and a relative of the patient circles him or her three times with it. The contents of the censer are then thrown outside the tent by the relative, removing the cause of affliction. Pho-bo lha-dbang says that a more powerful method of exorcism resorted to by him and his ancestors entails the use of the patient's *slang-nga*, a large metal vessel used to toast barleycorn. In this ritual, called *drag-po me-zhags* (wrathful fire sling), the *slang-nga* is filled with butter and boiled on the hearth. After reciting many mantras the *lha-pa* takes *yon-chab* (sanctified water) and throws it into the boiling butter. This causes a huge flame to erupt. Pho-bo lha-dbang observes that if the flame goes straight out through the *gung-khebs* (flap in the roof of a *'brog-pa* tent) and consumes all the butter, this is a sign that the ritual has been effective.

Pho-bo lha-dbang reports that the pernicious infectious agent known as *sa-btsog* can be combated by the possessing deity through a ritual known as *bye-ma sngags-ma* (sand spells). This exorcistic technique uses the black sand that barleycorn is customarily roasted in. The sand is heated in the *slang-nga* cauldron (commonly used for this purpose) until it is very hot to the accompaniment of many incantations. Pho-bo lha-dbang says that he then scoops up the sand in his hands and throws it at the patient, as well as at livestock. This sand is also mixed with water and the resulting liquid given to livestock to drink. The magically prepared black sand can also be taken away by patients for use at home.

Another powerful exorcistic method relied upon by Pho-bo lha-dbang is called *drag-po rde'u-bkram* (scattering of wrathful small stones). It is used when wicked demons such as the *gdon 'dre* cause deaths and other serious problems. The *drag-po rde'u-bkram* involves the collection of black and white stones from a location far removed from the patient's residence. The stones are broken into pieces about the size of a pea. During the trance ceremony, the stones are heated to an extremely high temperature using the *slang-nga*, accompanied by the recitation of wrathful mantras. Pho-bo lha-dbang states that he then grabs handfuls of the stones and throws them at the patient, his possessions, residence and livestock, in order that the demons be banished.

Pho-bo lha-dbang attests that the most dangerous type of demon is the *sri*[126] implicated in the worst types of misfortune—such as a succession of child deaths in a family or the massive loss of livestock. To eliminate this demon a rite of exorcism called *sri-bcad* (severing the *sri*) is employed by Pho-bo lha-dbang. He says that the possessing deities are either the *btsan* mountain deities or Dam-can mgar-ba nag-po. To carry out this rite, nine upstanding women from nine good clans must participate. They each spin yarn dyed in five colors. Using one piece of each color of yarn they then braid strings. The women make nine such strings, and they are entwined to form a single cord called a *sri-skud* (*sri* thread). Pho-bo lha-dbang states that before he goes into trance he takes a square-shaped piece of black cotton cloth more than one meter in length and folds it into a triangle. Along the length of this folded piece of cloth he places a white string called *srog-skud* (life-force thread). The *sri-skud* is set along side it. Then the black cloth, called *sri-khebs* (*sri* cover), is rolled up and bound with either a red and black string or white and black string known as the *sri-btags* (*sri* tie). Pho-bo lha-dbang says that after going into trance he takes one end of this exorcising device, and the patient the other end. Accompanied by many mantras, he waves a *sgro-spungs* (a bundle of lammergeier, eagle, hawk, and owl feathers)[127] over it three times, before striking it with the feather bundle. The

[126] For a description of this class of demons and other ways they are counteracted see Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, pp. 300–303, 516–518.

[127] According to Pho-bo lha-dbang, the *sgro-spungs* is made from the right tail (the so called kidney) feathers of eagle, feathers from the right wing of the *thang-dkar*, feathers from the right side of the chest of a hawk, and feathers from where the right wing and body of an owl meet. The feathers are bound together with red, yellow and green strings. The use of bird wings in powerful exorcistic rites is also attested in Bon literature. In the *Mu cho khrom 'dur*, a cycle of funerary texts primarily attributed to Mu-cho ldem-drug and other legendary early *gshen*, there is an anonymous and untitled text (New Collection of Bon *bka' brten*, vol. 6, nos. 195–200), which describes the ritual use of various types of bird wings, including those of the eagle and *thang-dkar*. The bird wings function to destroy the *gshin-rje* (demons of the dead), close the door of *ngan-song* (the three lower orders of living beings) and join the soul and mind of the deceased, among other awe-inspiring uses. Regarding the *cho-rabs* (ritual origin) of these bird wings, the text states (no. 197, lns. 4–5): "In the beginning, the great protector soul wing manifestation was emanated from the mind of gShen-rab. Intermediately, it was held by the nine *gshen* lineages. Presently, it is raised up as the *gshen* instrument of the funeral ritual." (*sprul pa'i bla gshog skyab chen 'di / dang po gshen rab thugs la sprul / bar du rgyud kyi gshen dgu'i bzung / da lta 'dur gshen phyag char bzhengs /*).

sri-bcad device is then examined to assess the success of the performance. If just the *sri-skud* has been cut by the feather bundle it means that the outcome of the rite was very good and the patient is free from the grasp of the demon. If the *sri-btags* has also been cut it means that the patient will face minor problems. The cutting of the *sri-khebs* by the feather bundle augurs that the patient will encounter persistent problems. In the unlikely event that the *srog-skud* has been severed in the procedure, the patient and his family are in grave danger. Fortunately, according to Pho-bo lha-dbang, the *sri-bcad* exorcism is usually effective and brings much relief to patients.

I had the good fortune of observing one of Pho-bo lha-dbang's trance ceremonies conducted to heal a middle-aged woman suffering from many chronic complaints, some of which were believed caused by the *klu* and *sa-bdag*. The ceremony was also used to diagnose the cause of a nun's illness. The nun could not attend but a diagnosis and the ritual observances she should initiate to effect a cure were passed on to her. The possessing deity was the peaceful form of A-stag klu-mo. The ceremony consisted of exorcistic and fortune-bestowing rituals. Interpretation of what Pho-bo lha-dbang said during the trance was made by his eldest son Karma bkra-shis. Even his family members report that some of what is uttered is incomprehensible. This is due to unusual voice modulations, the low volume of the utterances, and also because of background sounds coming from the drum and *gshang*. The non-observable or mystic phenomena described below were derived from briefings I held with Pho-bo lha-dbang and his family members subsequent to the trance ceremony.

6:45–7:45 AM: Preparation of the offerings and altar with the assistance of his two sons and wife. Altar placed along the east wall (in *'brog-pa* tents it would be in the west). Preliminary prayers are said and the altar is sprinkled with rice kernels.

7:45: A break for tea and bread.

7:54: Pho-bo lha-dbang dons his *stod-khebs*, followed by his *dam-gsal me-long*, *btsan-zhwa*, *rigs-lnga*, and *snyan-dar*, which is suspended over the diadems of the *rigs-lnga*.

8:00: Pho-bo lha-dbang sprinkles altar and all present in room with water, using one of his *rdo-rje*. This is a purification and blessing rite. Invocations to the *yi-dam*, Gu-ru rin-po-che and lamas begins.

8:02: While sitting on his bed, Pho-bo lha-dbang begins playing his *rnga-chung* (small hanging drum) and *gshang*. He says that he would ordinarily use the *rnga-chen* but that it was not available for this séance. The *mkha' 'gro* are mentioned in invocations.

8:04: Invocations continue in a low, almost inaudible voice. The portals of the *gling*, beginning with the *nang-gling*, are starting to open up. The *thugs 'od-zer* of Gu-ru rin-po-che, other *yi-dam*, high protectors, and *mkha' 'gro* begin arriving in the *gling*. The advent of these deities around Pho-bo lha-dbang and the opening of his *rtsa* channels is marked by the jerking of his head.

8:08: The tempo of the invocations and musical instruments picks up as more and more deities arrive at the three *gling*. The shaking of the Pho-bo lha-dbang's head and body increases in intensity.

8:11: The shaking and quaking has become quite violent as the deities close in on the *lha-pa*.

8:13: Pho-bo lha-dbang suddenly jumps up on his knees, heralding the entrance into his body of the possessing deity. His eldest son throws rice kernels on him to welcome the deity. The *lha-pa's* voice now has a lilting quality and at times, he makes a hissing sound. This is the voice of the deity. While on his knees Pho-bo lha-dbang continues to play his drum and *gshang*. The possessing deity first invites the *yi-dam* and lamas to be present at the ceremony. The deity then makes *tshogs* offerings to them, one of which is Pho-bo lha-dbang's body. It is said that the offering of the *lha-pa*'s body is considered particularly beneficial as it disposes the deities to help in the curative rites.

8:20: The deity announces its identity. It is A-stag klu-mo. She sings about her demon-destroying activities in gNam-ru, her appearance and ornaments. As she sings, the *lha-pa's* eyes are partially closed. During this period Pho-bo lha-dbang only plays his drum.

8:23: His eldest son offers A-stag klu-mo a *kha-btags* as a sign of respect. He beseeches the deity to help the patients. A-stag klu-mo chants verses about her retinue, which include the *mkha' 'gro*.

8:28: The patient is made to approach the *lha-pa*. She sits before him on the floor. He forcefully throws a few grains of rice on her head. It is thought that Gu-ru rin-po-che and the *mkha' 'gro* are dancing around the patient's head at this time.

8:30: The *lha-pa* waves the *phur-khebs* (dagger cloth) over the patient's head to the accompaniment of an invocation with a slow, deliberate rhythm.

8:31: Pho-bo lha-bdang waves head of the *las-phur* (activity dagger) over the patient's head.

8:33: Pho-bo lha-dbang returns to playing the drum and *gshang*. This interval marks the departure of A-stag lha-mo and possession by Bya-khyung. The *lha-pa* makes sounds like the cry of an eagle. His irises have rolled back into his head.

8:36: The *lha-pa* is jumping around like a flying bird while playing the *ḍa-ma-ru* and *gshang*.

8:37: He picks up strips of red and yellow cloth and holds them with the *gshang* in the left hand. He waves them over the patient's head.

8:38: Pho-bo lha-dbang places the cloth and *gshang* on the patient's neck and then legs. He sucks on the far end of the cloth punctuated by bird screeches.

8:39: The *lha-pa* carries out same procedure on patient's chest. While he is sucking there is a distinctive gurgling sound. Water from the altar is given to him to drink to help him swallow the disease-causing *grib*.

8:40: He snatches *grib* from the patient's chest and then from her leg. He swallows it.

8:41: The *lha-pa* plays the *gshang* and *rnga-chung* in silence. His body moves wildly as he digests and neutralizes the *grib*.

8:44: Bya-khyung departs from Pho-bo lha-dbang and A-stag klu-mo returns from the *bar-gling*. This interval is marked by a resumption of chanting. Gu-ru rin-po-che and the *mkha' 'gro* are invoked. The *lha-pa* picks up the *gshang* and *mda' dar* with his left hand.

8:46: He first touches the top of the patient's head with the *mda' dar* and then waves it over her head. The *lha-pa* sings about the benefits of the *mda' dar*, which include its *sa-bdag* and *klu*-suppressing capabilities. He asks that these spirits be favorably disposed towards the patient. He then touches the head and shoulders of the patient with the *mda' dar* three times.

8:52: Pho-bo lha-dbang puts the *mda' dar* back into the vessel of grain. He picks up a *rdo-rje* from the altar and holds it in his left hand with the *gshang*. He touches the head and back of patient with them, and then waves the *rdo-rje* over the patient's head. The blessings of the *yi-dam* and lamas are invoked.

8:56: The *lha-pa* picks up the *lha-tshogs phur-pa* and places it in his left hand along with the *gshang* and *rdo-rje*.

8:57: He replaces the *lha-tshogs phur-pa* in his hand with a second *rdo-rje*.

8:58: He returns the two *rdo-rje* to the altar. Pho-bo lha-dbang intones "*phaṭ, phaṭ, phaṭ*"[128] on rice grains and hands them to the patient. These are kept for her protection.

8:59: Pho-bo lha-dbang speaks in *lha-skad* while playing the *rnga-chung* and *gshang*. A-stag klu-mo is consulting with her retinue about the status of the second patient.

9:00: Not speaking, the *lha-pa* lightly strikes his *dam-gsal me-long* with the *gshang*.

9:01: In a more ordinary tone of voice A-stag klu-mo discusses the prognosis of the absent patient. The eldest son records what has been said. The patient attending the ceremony moves away from the *lha-pa*.

9:03: The *lha-pa* resumes his lyrical chant while playing his *gshang* and *rnga-chung*. This interval marks the process of conveying the deities and other beings in the *gling* back to their respective abodes. This is called *sgo-rgyab* (closing the doors). The process is the reverse of the advent of the deities; first the *phyi-gling* is closed, followed by the *bar-gling* and *nang-gling*. As this occurs the *rtsa* channels of Pho-bo lha-dbang are also being closed down. A-stag klu-mo offers his *rigs-lnga* to the *lamas* and *yi-dam*.

9:10: The *rigs-lnga* falls off Pho-bo lha-dbang's head, marking the end of the trance. He sits quietly for a few minutes.

xii) *sGrol-dkar, born circa 1952*

Interviewed in Ru-thog, June 5 and 6, 2002.

sGrol-dkar[129] is a *lha-mo* (female spirit-medium) for a large range of familiar Upper Tibet divinities. sGrol-dkar is probably the most respected of the few spirit-mediums currently practicing in Ru-thog. She reputedly has highly developed curative capabilities and attracts patients from several different townships. She reports going into trance scores of times per year, and as many as three times in a single day. sGrol-dkar states that patients often come to her out of desperation not knowing where else to turn for emergency medical care, and that she acts out of a compulsion to help them. Among Ru-thog's natives sGrol-dkar is also commonly referred to as a *klu-mo*,

[128] Powerful mantra for dispelling demons and harmful influences.

[129] In order to protect the identity of this individual, I have employed a pseudonym in this account.

because of her reliance on this class of deities. Originally, her family came from Ri'u Am-chung (Little Mountain Small Formation), in northeastern Ru-thog. Circa 1972, they and around 30 other families were resettled in the southern portion of the county.

sGrol-dkar states that her maternal uncle Nor-rtse, who passed away more than 30 years ago, was also a spirit-medium. She believes that he was part of a hereditary line of spirit-mediums, the genealogical history of which has been lost. sGrol-dkar says that her paternal lineage was comprised of *sngags-pa*. Due to her hereditary predisposition, deities began to possess her at the age of 25.[130] She reports that these possessions caused her to suffer mental disturbances and neurological disorders in the limbs. After two years of these afflictions, on the full moon day of the 12th lunar month, the possessing deities first spoke through sGrol-dkar, marking the start of her career as a *lha-mo*. sGrol-dkar says that from that time, she became successful in embodying the deities at will, and has practiced now for more than two decades.

sGrol-dkar reports that during the early years of practice, while in trance, she would often condemn the destruction and prohibition of Tibetan religion that took place in the 1960s and 1970s. She says that during these occasions her possessing deities would exhort onlookers to resume their traditional religious customs and practices. Among the most important of these, according to sGrol-dkar, are the offerings and other ritual observances for the indigenous pantheon of Upper Tibet. While in trance, she would encourage the practice of *lha-gsol* and *klu-gsol* rituals as an instrument for insuring personal and community well-being. From what I could gather from various informants, sGrol-dkar has had a fairly significant role in the restitution of Tibetan religion in her corner of Ru-thog.

sGrol-dkar mentions that an older female relative of hers, who fled many years ago to nearby La-dwags, is also a *lha-mo*. She helped

[130] Her initiation into spirit-mediumship coincided with the period of liberalization and the disbanding of the pastoral collectives that occurred at the end of the 1970s. The breakup of the communist collectives and the reestablishment of the traditional family structure as the basic unit of production allowed the degree of privacy and confidentiality needed for sGrol-dkar's practice to flourish. Her adoption of the spirit-medium vocation was part of the larger resurgence of traditional activities that occurred after the period of brutal repression in the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Her general acceptance in the stockbreeding community as a *lha-mo* can be explained by the fact that she is considered one of the region's most valued healthcare providers.

sGrol-dkar procure her *gshang*. sGrol-dkar remarks that she obtained her *rigs-lnga* headdress in trade from India, while her brass *gling* and *ḍa-ma-ru* were donated by an elderly *sngags-pa* from sDe-rog, in Ru-thog. The *mda' dar* sGrol-dkar uses was bestowed upon her by the main monastery in Ru-thog, Lhun-grub chos-lding. By her own admission, sGrol-dkar had no formal training or initiation as her older family members had passed away by the time she began to practice as a medium. She believes that she managed to become an adept *lha-mo* primarily because of her ancestral link with the profession and its deities. sGrol-dkar claims that all her knowledge of healing, deities and regional lore were revealed to her in trance by the divinities themselves. She cites her tutelary gods and the few spiritually-minded people she came in contact with as assisting her in this process. Clearly, the great faith she has in her lamas and divine protectors has played an important role in her mastery of spirit-mediumship. It also appears to me that sGrol-dkar's perseverance, courage and fortitude were also instrumental in the resuscitation of spirit-mediumship in Ru-thog.

sGrol-dkar states that her patrons of the trance are the Karma-pa, the lamas of her paternal lineage. The other patron of the séance activities is Gu-ru rin-po-che. She says that she begins her trance ceremony with prayers to the Karma-pa and the eight manifestations of Gu-ru rin-po-che, the Gu-ru mtshan-brgyad. sGrol-dkar is illiterate; all invocations to the gurus and deities are therefore done by heart. The main protector of the séance is dPal-ldan lha-mo. Another high protective god is the crow-faced sGo-srung mgon-po bya-rog. According to sGrol-dkar, other deities that serve as guardians during the trance are her *phugs-lha* (family protective deity) Dam-can mgar-ba nag-po and her *mo-lha* (maternal protective deity) Dung-skyong dkar-mo, a *klu-mo* that resides at Ri'u Am-chung. She believes that during the ceremony, an aspect of all the divine participants and protectors of the trance come to reside in her *gling*. She divides the *gling* into the typical three concentric bands representative of the three domains of the universe: sky, earth and underworld. However, she is not familiar with the way in which the deities arrange themselves in the mirror. At the moment of possession, sGrol-dkar thinks that her *rnam-shes* (consciousness) is conveyed to the *gling* and guarded over by dPal-ldan lha-mo.

sGrol-dkar maintains that the most important patronizing deity involved in trance ceremony is gNyan-chen thang-lha. He is said to

officiate over the proceedings of the trance, regulating the activities of the various possessing deities. A primary pair of possessing deities are Thang-lha'i klu-btsan, a female-male dyad in the circle of gNyan-chen thang-lha. Another possessing pair of deities consisting of a *klu-mo* and *btsan* is simply called by sGrol-dkar Ru-thog klu-btsan, after their place of residence.[131] She refers to this divine husband and wife as *Myes-myes* (grandfather) and *I-pi* (grandmother) respectively, and they are thought of as the ancestral couple of Ru-thog.[132] However, sGrol-dkar says she does not specifically know how they gave rise to the living beings of the region. sGrol-dkar's most common possessing deity is Ngur-ru byang-btsan of O-byang, wearer of the *rigs-lnga*.[133] Another *btsan* deity that sGrol-dkar says possesses her is bTsan-rgod nam-ra of Bar-tha. As with other spirit-mediums, she notes that the fierce *btsan* deities participate in exorcising evil spirits and in healing rites. Another deity that she claims takes hold of her is Ge-khod dbang-thang dkar-po, the chief *yul-lha* of Ru-thog.[134] His

[131] It is unclear which mountain sGrol-dkar refers to. The female aspect of Ru-thog (Klu-btsan mchor-mo) is most probably the deity popularly known as Nya-ni, the chief *klu-mo* of Ru-thog proper. This locale is also known as rDzong-ri, mDzo-mo ru-rdzong, and mTsho-mo ru-rdzong after the ancient fortress located there. For archaeological information on this locale see Bellezza 2000, pp. 102–104.

[132] It is a common custom in mNga' ris (particularly in Ru-thog, sGar and rTsa-mda') to refer to the various female *yul-lha* and *klu-mo* as *I-pi* (grandmother) and the male *yul-lha* as *myes-myes* (grandfather).

[133] The name of this deity is also inverted to read Byang-btsan ngur-ru. It is the *yul-lha* of O-byang (also called Ṇo-ma-ni, which in the language of La-dwags means 'Country of Residence that Sprung Forth from the Earth'), located on the north shore of Ru-thog's mTsho-mo ngang-la. According to legend, it came to this place in the form of a duck from gNas-chung monastery, in Lhasa. It was one of four Ngur-ru deities that flew off in the cardinal directions. Ngur-ru byang-btsan flew north from gNas-chung and circled Ru-thog's Lhun-grub chos-lding monastery three times before it landed near a *ma-ṇi* wheel in O-byang. It exhibited wonderful signs and then flew off to mGon-po lha-ri. A shrine called Byang-btsan ngur-ru btsan-khang came to be founded at both of these locations. See Chos-ngag, pp. 173–174.

[134] This sacred mountain (33° 18" north latitude / 79° 46" east longitude) is also commonly called Ge-khod gnyan-lung. In the local sTod dialect the pronunciation and spelling of Ge-khod has been corrupted to rGyab-sgog or rGya 'og. However, according to local experts such as the head lama of the Ru-thog monastery, Myes Blo-bzang bstan-pa (born circa 1932), there is no question that the original spelling was Ge-khod. This is corroborated by Bon literary sources. In the local oral tradition, Ge-khod was the *lha-ri* (divine mountain) of the ancient Hor, who once occupied Ru-thog. The Hor are commonly thought to have come from the region known in Chinese as Xinjiang (Eastern Turkestan) during the time of the epic hero Gling ge-sar. Their leader, bShan-pa sme-ru-rtse, lent his name to the old citadel at Ru-thog. For more information on Ge-khod and his Bon origins see Part Four, section iii p. 399 (fn. 197), pp. 415–417.

main function is reported to be the execution of the *lha-gsol*, a ritual conducted for the benefit of individual patients as well as the locale. The *lha-gsol* consists of invocations and offerings to the *yul-lha*. sGrol-dkar adds that Ge-khod's mate, the *klu-mo* Klu-btsan mchor-mo, also takes part in séances. According to her, two other key *klu-mo* are Khyung-sprug dkar-mo (White Girl Khyung) and Klu-mo rgya-bkra mchor-mo (a multi-colored hawk). Khyung-sprug dkar-mo has a host of *khyung* with the same appearance as herself. Both of these *klu-mo* are said to reside in the great lakes of Upper Tibet such as mTsho ma-pham. However, in keeping with their ornithomorphous appearance, they also have a celestial identity.[135]

sGrol-dkar reports that she mostly sucks out *grib* that cause illness in her patients by using the *gshang*. sGrol-dkar states that the remedial spirits who carry out the removal of impurities include Thang-lha'i khyi-rgod rag-pa (Thang-lha's Tawny Wild Dog), Thang-lha'i 'brong-dur rag-pa (Thang lha's Tawny Cemetery Wild Yak), Thang-lha mi-dkar rta-dkar (resplendent white men mounted on white steeds in the circle of Thang-lha), Za-rog spyang-gu spun-dun (seven brothers in the form of wolves), and Bya-khyung-rgod (an eagle-like spirit). Another deity that presides over the sucking out of contamination (*'jibs-rogs*) is A-dmar rol-pa skya-bdun of sGer-rtse. sGrol-dkar also uses a *rdo-rje* to rid patients of harm-causing influences, and a *mda' dar* for the bestowal of good fortune.

sGrol-dkar accepts that the Thang-lha, Ge-khod, Ru-thog, and other *klu-mo* cure diseases attributed to this class of deities such as skin ailments and arthritis. The various *klu-mo* also function to heal sick livestock. She also notes that the *klu-mo* are responsible for restoring the *phywa-g.yang* (fortune capability) of patients through the *g.yang 'gugs* ritual. Another important possessing *klu-mo* is Lha-mtsho mchor-mo, which sGrol-dkar equates with Thang-lha's mate gNam-mtsho phyug-mo.[136] sGrol-dkar considers that Lha-mtsho mchor-mo might

[135] This mythic theme is also found in Bon offering texts for the lake deities. For example, in *Srid pa'i lha chen ri mtsho gnas bdag lcam dral mchod bstod*, by Nyi-ma bstan 'dzin (born 1813), Dang-ra g.yu-mtsho (mTsho-phyug g.yu-mtsho) has the shape of a *khyung* and is the abode of the celestial mother deity gNam-phyi gung-rgyal. See Bellezza 1997, p. 345.

[136] From a Buddhist doctrinal perspective however, it is likely that sGrol-dkar is actually channeling a subsidiary form or emanation of gNam-mtsho rather than the primary goddess herself. It is generally thought that goddesses such as gNam-mtsho are too powerful for mediums to embody.

actually be just a different form of the Thang-lha'i *klu-mo*. She describes her as green in color and wearing green aqueous garments. Lha-mtsho mchor-mo's most important function is to restore the ecological balance of the region, which sGrol-dkar believes is being adversely affected by mining, fishing, the mass killing of insects, and other harmful activities. This is realized through a *g.yang 'gugs* ritual carried out on behalf of the lakes of Upper Tibet. This ritual helps to increase the milk production of livestock. Lha-mtsho mchor-mo also frequently participates in a ritual to insure that the personal protective spirits of a newly wed couple are in concordance with one another. While under the possession of the *klu-mo* sGrol-dkar conducts the *klu-gsol* ritual, which entails the offering of juniper, sandalwood and *spos-dkar* incense to the *klu*, as well as the first portions (*phud*) of milk, spring water, tea, and grains.

sGrol-dkar explains that the various *klu-mo* officiate over their own *klu-gsol* and *g.yang 'gugs* rituals, giving them a degree of effectiveness only possible for divine ritualists. Likewise, Ge-khod and Thang-lha conduct their own *lha-gsol*. She points out however, the offerings they make are not merely for their own satisfaction but for the entire pantheon of environment-bound deities of Upper Tibet. Perhaps most importantly, according to sGrol-dkar, the assemblage of offerings is also proffered to the higher Buddhist deities, thereby bringing pleasure not only to worldly deities but to those who have passed beyond the sphere of mundane existence. While possessed sGrol-dkar says that she often instructs patients to do their own *lha-gsol* and *klu-gsol*, as well as make pilgrimage, build *mchod-rten* and carve *ma-ṇi* stones. sGrol-dkar claims that these activities are prescribed by the deities to eliminate *gnod-pa* (harm) and *bar-chad* (obstacles) that cause misfortune and illness.

To favorably influence the weather, sGrol-dkar undertakes to be possessed by a goddess called Ma-ne-ne or Khro-mo nag-mo, who she reports is the elder sister of the epic hero Gling ge-sar.[137] This deity is said to be able to avert hailstorms and other destructive weather by her association with the sky-dwelling *mkha' 'gro-ma*. sGrol-dkar states that invocations to Gling ge-sar and Gu-ru rin-po-che are also an instrumental part of the ritual to affect the weather.

[137] Stein (1981: 6) reports that Ma-ne-ne is the same as Gung-sman rgyal-mo, the heavenly aunt of Ge-sar, and his advisor and protectress.

Other deities that play a part include the savioress sGrol-ma dkar-mo and Tibet's main *gcod* figures, Pha dam-pa sangs-rgyas and Ma-cig lab-sgron. The latter personality is reported by sGrol-dkar to have a close correspondence with Ma-ne-ne.

On June 5, 2002, I had the privilege of observing sGrol-dkar perform a *g.yang 'gugs* ritual while in trance. It was decided that we would seek good fortune for my High Tibet Circle Expedition that was then in progress, as well as for the countryside in general. The main possessing deity of the trance ceremony was Lha-mtsho mchor-mo. sGrol-dkar's husband acted as her assistant, helping in the ritual performances. Her husband also kindly helped to interpret the various activities and utterances of the trance for me. The séance was held in the evening after the milking and corralling of the ewes and goats. The basic structure of the trance ceremony was as follows:

1) Altar set up and costume donned.
2) Buddhist invocations made.
3) Deity enters sGrol-dkar.
4) Deity invokes the Karma-pa and pays her respects to him and his lineage.
5) Lha-mtsho mchor-mo formally announces her identity.
6) The various *klu-mo* and other local deities are invoked, and the *klu-rgyud* (lineage of the female *klu*) proclaimed.
7) *g.Yang 'gugs* ritual performed. A major component of it is the *klu-gsol*. sGrol-dkar figuratively and literally offers a variety of objects to the *klu-mo* and the mountain deities, and chants their praises. The offerings and eulogies are also directed to the pantheon of Buddhist deities.
8) *g.Yang 'gugs* ritual consummated.
9) Trance ends.
10) Thanksgiving prayers made by sGrol-dkar, and ritual paraphernalia stowed away.

Now let us look at the trance ceremony in more detail. It reveals that the various *klu-mo* and lake deities are responsible for personal well-being, individual and community prosperity, and ecological harmony.

21:55: A small altar is set on the west side of the single-room house. It is located opposite the entrance, as is customary. It consists of a metal trunk upon which a cloth is spread. Barley grain

and *rtsam-pa* (parched barley meal) are sprinkled over the tablecloth. The family's permanent altar is a larger metal trunk situated higher up. On this altar is the family's *mda' dar*, the *rten* (receptacle) for their paternal protective deities. These include the husband's *pho-lha* Rab-brtan rgyal-po, evidently a protector of the old Rab-brtan monastery in Ru-thog, and his *phugs-lha*, the *klu-mo* of sDe-chos valley (in sDe-rog township, Ru-thog), A-ma mdzes (Beautiful Mother). Hanging on the wall near the permanent altar is the *klu-dar sngon-mo* (blue flag of the female *klu*), the *rten* (support) for sGrol-dkar's *mo-lha*, Dung-skyong dkar-mo. sGrol-dkar reports that these personal protective deities exert a positive influence on the séance, helping to defend her and the participants against harm. On the ceremonial altar a modest array of offerings are placed. These include a small bowl of juniper and *gangs-spos*[138] incense, a candle, an oil lamp, tiny vessels of black tea, milk, water and salt, and a *rdo-rje*. There is also a bowl heaped high with *rtsam-pa* in which the *gling*, another *rdo-rje* and a small photo of the *lha-mo 'tshogs-zhing* (depiction of dPal-ldan lha-mo and her retinue) are inserted.

22:10: sGrol-dkar dons her green *stod-khebs* (mantle) and a kerchief while reciting *skyabs 'gro* (Buddhist refuge prayers) and dedicatory prayers for the well-being of all sentient beings. The incense is lit.

22:15: She recites *gsol 'debs* (devotional prayers) to the Karma-pa while putting on her *rigs-lnga*. The *rigs-lnga* features images of the Gyal-ba rigs-lnga in the diadems, and many cloth streamers and *kha-btags* (offering scarves) hang from it. These cloth items are sometimes given to patients for their well-being and protection after the séance is completed. After arranging her *rigs-lnga*, sGrol-dkar begins to play the *ḍa-ma-ru* with the right hand and the *gshang* placed in the left hand while facing the altar. As she plays she gently rocks back and forth.

22:17: This is the time it is believed that the presiding deity enters sGrol-dkar. This moment is marked by a slight jerk of the body and the rolling back of her eyes.

22:18: Devotional prayers to the Karma-pa are still being recited. The tempo of playing the *ḍa-ma-ru* and *gshang* picks up.

22:20: There is more vigorous movement of sGrol-dkar's body and the pitch of her voice intensifies as she invokes the lineage lamas,

[138] An aromatic creeping plant that grows on the flanks of Gangs rin-po-che and other high mountains.

the *mkha' 'gro-ma*, mTsho ma-pham, and Gangs rin-po-che. The presiding deity, Lha-mtsho mchor-mo, then identifies herself. While being possessed by this goddess sGrol-dkar's voice varies greatly. At times it is soft and measured, at other times high pitched and piercing. Her facial expressions also change from contemplative to somewhat contorted. At times she is wrathful and intense, at other times during the trance deeply absorbed. It is a fine ceremonial performance rich in nuance and emotion.

22:22: sGrol-dkar stops playing her instruments and chants the *klu-rgyud*. In it the various *klu-mo* and Upper Tibetan lake deities are mentioned by name. The *klu-rgyud* affirms their ancient origins and that they come under the auspices of Buddhism, legitimizing their role in the ceremony. The *klu-rgyud* also notes that these female deities are led by dPal-ldan lha-mo; however, it provides no cosmogonic lore (this belonging to a nearly extinct phase of the region's cultural legacy). The *mkha' 'gro* are also invoked. Occasionally, the chanting is punctuated by "*sngeg, sngeg, sngeg*"—the sound of the rustling of the wings of the duck deity Ngur-ru sman-pa dkar-po.[139] Subsequent to the trance, sGrol-dkar notes that this male *klu* is a divine physician figure in the retinues of Lha-mtsho mchor-mo and the *klu-mo* of Ru-thog.

22:28: sGrol-dkar (the presiding deity) pays her respects to a number of Buddhist personalities and deities while playing the *ḍa-ma-ru* and *gshang*.

22:32: The *g.yang 'gugs* sequence of the trance ceremony begins. Invoking the local deities sGrol-dkar stops playing and picks up the *rdo-rje* resting on the altar and begins waving it around. At times she dips it into the bowl of milk. This is done while invoking the auspicious creatures in Lha-mtsho mchor-mo's retinue. These include the three fish of the *klu*, *srin-nya* (a mythical carnivorous fish), *dung-nya* (conch fish) and *g.yu-nya* (turquoise fish); the deer of the *klu*;[140]

[139] A *lha-mo* undergoing initiation in Ladakh is recorded as rhythmically chanting the similar sound '*nja nja nja*' (Schenk 1993: 337), but the significance of this utterance is not addressed in this paper.

[140] The deer is one of the most auspicious animals in Upper Tibet, despite being extinct in most of the region. The white-lipped deer (*Cervus albirostris*) is still found on the eastern fringes of the Byang-thang (Schaller 1998: 143, 144). Deer are represented in the circle of various indigenous deities who also occasionally appear to manifest in the form of this animal. In propitiatory rituals deer are therefore often offered to these deities. In Ladakh, the ibex assumes these same types of functions.

and the *thang-dkar* of the *klu*. Her husband explains that it is thought that through the invocations all of these magical creatures are thought to be present at the ceremony. The jewel of the *klu* is also mentioned.

22:37: sGrol-dkar resumes playing the *ḍa-ma-ru* and *gshang*, keeping the *rdo-rje* in her left hand.

22:38: She stops playing and seeks the blessings of Gu-ru rin-po-che and the Karma-pa.

22:43: sGrol-dkar decries the recent vandalism of Ri'u dgon-pa, a superb ancient temple in Ri'u Am-chung. This is interspersed with offerings to the *klu-mo*, which include the blue female goat of the *klu*, the blue ewe of the *klu*, the blue female yak of the *klu*, and the blue mare of the *klu*. Other offerings specified are various medicinal substances, various types of incense, and precious substances such as gold, silver, conch, carnelian, turquoise, pearls, and coral. The *klu'i nor-bu bya-rigs* (types of jewel birds of the *klu*) are also figuratively offered. These include the peacock, duck, cuckoo, partridge and *thang-dkar*.

22:46: Reference is made to the raising of a *dar-lcog* (prayer flag mast) for the *klu-mo* and the *bsod-nams* (merit) it brings. The offerings and raising of the *dar-lcog* are also directed to a male deity named dGra-lha rta-thod dkar-po (White Horse Turban dGra-lha). I later learn that this counterpart of the *klu-mo* is also instrumental in insuring an individual's good fortune.

22:50: sGrol-dkar condemns the destruction of the environment in Ru-thog. She cites mining, fishing and the killing of insects as examples.

22:52: She recites the heroic deeds of Thang-lha and other deities, noting that it is beyond the ability of anyone to record all of them. This might have been a reference to me, as I was feverishly engaged in trying to write down all of sGrol-dkar's utterances. Thang-lha and the other mountain gods are known as the protectors and patrons of people.

22:55: sGrol-dkar turns to me and asks if I have had enough good fortune bestowed upon me. I reply affirmatively. She then pays her respects to the Buddhist deities, and then invokes Nam-ra, Rol-pa skya-bdun and A-myes rma-chen spom-ra.

For example, in one account of *lha-pa* in Ladakh, three ibex are said to have accompanied them for some distance, an auspicious sign (Srinivas 2001: 144).

22:59: All the ingredients on the altar are now fully consecrated. sGrol-dkar directs her husband to take the vessel of milk from the ceremonial altar and offer it to all the deities at the family's permanent altar.

23:00: Consummation of the *g.yang 'gugs* ritual takes place. The vessel of milk is returned to sGrol-dkar, who then repeatedly sprinkles its contents with her *rdo-rje* on all present in the room. This is done while invoking the *klu-mo*. Her husband then offers each person a small spoon of milk to drink.

23:04: The vessel of milk is returned to sGrol-dkar who places it and the remaining contents back on the ceremonial altar. She then blows several times on her *rdo-rje*, simulating the sound of the conch.

23:06: She picks up barley grains from the altar and scatters them around the room as a blessing. She then vigorously plays her *ḍa-ma-ru* and *gshang* while strongly shaking her head.

23:08: sGrol-dkar's *rigs-lnga* falls off her head, signaling the end of her possession. She begins to softly recite Buddhist prayers as she methodically stows away her ceremonial equipment.

xiii) *Pho-bo mtsho-rgyal, born circa 1939*

Interviewed in Ru 'thor township, 'Brong-pa, June 10 and 11, 2002.

Pho-bo mtsho-rgyal states that he belongs to the Kya-kya clan, which according to local tradition, is one of the six original clans of Ru 'thor (region also known as A-rnams byang-ma).[141] There are a number of practicing *lha-pa* in Ru 'thor but Pho-bo mtsho-rgyal seems to be the one held in highest repute by his fellow *'brog-pa*. His legitimacy stems from the long line of spirit-mediums in both his family and his wife's family. Pho-bo mtsho-rgyal is a soft-spoken, diffident man, who like most of Upper Tibet's other spirit-mediums, derives his livelihood from the family's livestock. He spends most of the day taking his herds to graze, limiting the amount of time he could spare for our interviews.

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[141] The other five clans are: Gu-rub, 'A-ba, Phyug-rtsang, bDod, and sTag-rtse. These six clans are said to be the original worshippers of Ru 'thor's sacred mountain, the *pho-lha* bKa' lha-btsan. The *mo-lha* of these six clans is the nearby mountain Chu-yig and the lake Rin-chen shor 'ur mtsho. According to elders, the real name of their region is Rus 'thor (Dispersed Clans), so called because it has been enriched by a diverse mixture of clans over history.

Pho-bo mtsho-rgyal says that his teacher was his father-in-law, a *lha-pa* named Karma who lived until he was around 80 years of age. His paternal grandfather was also a *lha-pa*. Pad-ma, his maternal uncle and a monk at Ma-mig monastery in Seng 'khor, sGer-rtse county, acted as his patron. Pho-bo mtsho-rgyal reports that Pad-ma was responsible for his *rab-gnas* (consecration) and *khrus* (ablutions), making him an appropriate receptacle for the deities. Pho-bo mtsho-rgyal observes that a lama patron is essential for a *lha-pa*. Not only does he perform the rituals that serve to protect and aid the medium, the lama provides a doctrinal grounding for the practice as well. His first possession was by Gangs-ri lha-btsan and came when he was 25 years old. Karma, his father-in-law, identified the chief deities and pantheon of helping spirits who were possessing him, and taught the techniques used by spirit-mediums for healing and fortune-bestowal. Pho-bo mtsho-rgyal relates that during the period of his training strings were tied around his ring fingers to regulate the entry of the possessing deities. Pho-bo mtsho-rgyal notes that he inherited his three *gling, gshang* and other ritual equipment from his father-in-law.

According to Pho-bo mtsho-rgyal, the patron benefactors of the trance ceremony are Gu-ru rin-po-che and the *bodhisattva* of skillful means, Phyag-na rdo-rje. A fierce guardian of Pho-bo mtsho-rgyal is rTa-mgrin, the horse-headed tantric tutelary god. Pho-bo mtsho-rgyal states that an eponymous *btsan* member of this deity's retinue is one of his possessing deities. dMag-zor rgyal-mo is another chief protector of the *lha-pa* and trance ceremony. Pho-bo mtsho-rgyal calls her the leader of the possessing deities and their circles of helping spirits. An important patroness of the séance is mKha' 'gro dkar-mo of Gyang-grags, the monastery in the inner *skor-ba* (circuit) of Gangs rin-po-che.[142] She is said to bestow blessings on all present in the ceremony, and to provide for the general welfare of the *lha-pa* and his patients.

Pho-bo mtsho-rgyal claims that the various possessing *btsan* and their *'jibs-spyang* (literally, sucking wolves—a general name for the circle of helping spirits) cure diseases caused by the various types of *grib*. He says that the *lha* help to restore the balance between an

[142] The late Bon *dpa' mo* of the rTa-rgo region, Sri-thar sgrol-ma, also had a *mkha' 'gro* guardian from Gyang-grags monastery (Bellezza 1997: 319).

individual and his personal protective spirits. Pho-bo mtsho-rgyal notes that this is an essential activity because a personal deity that withdraws its protection can cause the death of a person in a devastatingly short period of time. Pho-bo mtsho-rgyal's *phugs-lha* is Chos-sku jag-pa me-len, a common *btsan* monastic protector in Upper Tibet.[143] This figure is both a protecting and possessing deity of the trance ceremony. Jag-pa me-len has a special helping deity named Wa-rgya dkar-chung (Little White Fox). Pho-bo mtsho-rgyal's *pho-lha* is Zhing-skyong thang-lha (gNyan-chen thang-lha), who officiates over the trance ceremony and has a protective role. He is said to have his own group of remedial spirits such as Khyi-rgod rag-pa (Wild Tawny Dog), Tsi-ri rag-dmar mgo-dgu (a russet-colored wolf with nine heads), bSam-yas btsan gyi spu-dmar (an important group of red-haired *btsan*),[144] and 'Brong-dur kham-pa (Cemetery Bay-Colored Wild Yak).

Pho-bo mtsho-rgyal declares that his most popular possessing deity is Gangs-ri lha-btsan. This mountain deity's special helping spirit is Wa-mo dkar-mo (White Female Fox). Dam-can is a possessing deity that eliminates the terrible misfortunes caused by the *sri* demons. His helper is the great consumer of contamination Za-mchog ras-khyi spu-dmar, a red-haired dog with copper fangs. According to Pho-bo mtsho-rgyal, another possessing deity and *rtsa-bdag* (guardian of the subtle channels) is A 'ong stag-lha me 'bar, a *btsan* whose residence is unknown to him.[145] *Klu-mo* also have an important therapeutic function in the ministrations of Pho-bo mtsho-rgyal. He says that they cure both people and livestock of *klu-nad* (diseases caused by *klu*), and are involved in *g.yang 'gugs* rituals. The two main *klu-mo* of the trance are Ma-pham klu-btsan of Ma-pham g.yu-mtsho, and Klu dung-lo mdzes-dkar (Beautiful White Conch Leaf Klu), the *mo-lha* of Pho-bo mtsho-rgyal's wife. Klu dung-lo mdzes-dkar appears to be native to Ru 'thor. Other female *klu* who participate in the trance ceremony are Klu-mo dung-ldan 'od-dkar (White Light Conch Possessor Klu-mo), Dzam-nag klu-mo (Black World Klu-mo) and

[143] In the eastern Byang-thang, Jag-pa me-len was the protector of Bya-do monastery, located on the north shore of gNam-mtsho (Bellezza 1997: 256).

[144] This group probably bears some correspondence to the 'Bar-ba spun-bdun of southern Tibet, *btsan* protectors of bSam-yas monastery.

[145] A lake in dGe-rgyas county is named A 'ong mtsho, but Pho-bo mtsho-rgyal is not aware if there is any correspondence between it and the like-named *btsan* deity.

Dzam-dkar klu-mo (White World Klu-mo). These latter two deities are reported by Pho-bo mtsho-rgyal to dwell in the lakes of Upper Tibet.

The drumheads of Pho-bo mtsho-rgyal's *ḍa-ma-ru* are made of gazelle skin, which he says produce a sound especially pleasing to the deities. His old *gshang* is also highly prized by him for its attractive sound. His *rigs-lnga* features images of the rGyal-ba rigs-lnga Buddhas. The wings attached to it have the eyes of the *khyung* painted on them. Pho-bo mtsho-rgyal explains that these eyes guard the subterranean realm and the beings that reside in it. His red peaked cap worn under the *rigs-lnga* is called *btsan-zhwa*, and is decorated with the eyes of the *btsan*. This hat is said to attract the *thugs* (mind in the form of radiant light) of the possessing deities. On the top of the *btsan-zhwa* is a bunch of downy *thang-dkar* feathers. Pho-bo mtsho-rgyal explains that the *thang-dkar* bird is a *srid-pa'i lha* (god of existence) that acts to protect the medium. Pho-bo mtsho-rgyal uses three *gling* in an arrangement customary of many *lha-pa: phyi-gling*—assembly point for the *lha* (among which is Lha-chen dkar-po, who apparently is a form of the Indian deity Brahma); *bar-gling*—assembly point for the *btsan; nang-gling*—assembly point for the host of *klu*, and the place where, according to Pho-bo mtsho-rgyal, his *thugs* is conveyed during the possession.

In the *g.yang 'gugs* ritual, Pho-bo mtsho-rgyal employs the *mda' dar* for attracting *tshe-g.yang* (good fortune of life capability) and *nor-g.yang* (good fortune of wealth capability) to his patients. He uses a *phurpa* (ritual dagger) for removing harmful influences from those he is treating. To purify defilments he conducts *khrus* (ablutions), and to cure diseases caused by the *sa-bdag* (earth spirits) he uses hot black sand that is empowered with mantras. He believes that this magical sand when thrown upon patients is a potent weapon against the *sa-bdag* of the underworld.

xiv) *Karma rig 'dzin, born circa 1935*

Interviewed in sMad-pa township, Shan-rtsa, September 26–28, 2002

Karma rig 'dzin reports that he is a ninth generation spirit-medium on his father's side. His circumstances are very modest and he subsists on a small herd of livestock. A quiet man of much dignity, he was pleased to answer my many questions when he learned that I was writing a book about the spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet.

Karma rig 'dzin affirms that he belongs to the north lineage of the illustrious Zur-bzhi lha-babs bzhi, the original four lineages of spirit-mediums in Tibet.[146] He believes that these four primordial *lha-pa* of the cardinal directions were reincarnations of Buddha figures: east—rDo-rje sems-dpa'; south—Rin-chen 'byung-gnas; west—sNang-ba mtha' yas; and north—Don-yod grub-pa. According to Karma rig 'dzin, a hallmark of belonging to the premier *zur-bzhi* lineage is that the possessing deities reside in the five main subtle energy channels: *dbu-ma* (central channel), *rkyang-ma* (right collateral channel), *ro-ma* (left collateral channel), *snying-phrom* (channel in middle of the back), and *stong-nyid* (channel centered in the sternum). He adds that lesser spirit-mediums cannot be so fully possessed by the deities as they do not have full access to the subtle channels.

According to Karma rig 'dzin, in early times members of the Zur-bzhi lha-babs bzhi could do great magical feats such as ride vultures and eagles, but gradually their power diminished due to increasing *grib* (contamination). He says that the original *zur-bzhi lha-pa* were god-like individuals, however, by being born human they suffered a certain amount of general defilement, which has mounted over the generations. Still, his family lineage produced strong spirit-mediums, and Karma rig 'dzin believes that his paternal uncle performed operations with his *phyi-gling*. Karma rig 'dzin has one son and daughter, neither of whom practices as a spirit-medium.

Both Karma rig 'dzin's mother and father were spirit-mediums. His father belonged to the Rag-shi clan and was born in sMar-khams, Khams. His father was a spirit-medium for many of the same deities as himself (as well as being a Ge-sar bard). Karma rig 'dzin's mother hailed from 'Dam-gzhung and belonged to the mGar-ba clan. She was a medium for the famous *btsan* of gNam-ru, rKyang-khra. Karma rig 'dzin states that he was born while his parents were on pilgrimage to Gangs rin-po-che; his mother passed away one week later. Karma rig 'dzin and his father remained in western Tibet. He states that at age eleven he began having visitations from the deities. He reports seeing apparitions of the *yul-lha* mounted on horses, deer and *rkyang*. He would also see the *yul-lha* as resplendent ancient Tibetan military marching figures attired in armor and brandishing weapons. In this period he had fearful hallucinations of standing

146 The medium Pho-bo lha-dbang is also a member of this original Buddhist lineage. See pp. 114, 115.

skeletons with beating hearts and plagues of strange insects. He also recalls suffering from many ailments including bleeding from the mouth, severe backache and heart pain.

Karma rig 'dzin states that when he was twelve years old, he met the 16th Karma-pa, who said that he and his father would find a certain lama that could help him. At age thirteen, after making pilgrimage to Buddhist holy sites in Nepal including the Kathmandu Valley, he and his father reached Na-bkra monastery in the vicinity of sKyid-grong/sKyid-rong. Here they met Lama Thub-bstan ngag-dbang 'jigs-med, who performed the *rtsa-sgo phye-ba*—the opening and purification of the subtle energy channels, for Karma rig 'dzin. He notes that this ritual included *khrus* (ablutions) and *rab-gnas* (consecration) procedures. Another procedure of the *rtsa-rgo phye-ba* was the binding of the ring fingers with strings to prevent unwelcome intrusions from the deities. According to Karma rig 'dzin, any manner of god or demon can enter the body through the openings in the ring fingers and it is far more efficacious for the possessing deities to enter the medium from other bodily portals. He says that the *lha* enter via the top of the head, the *btsan* from the right shoulder, and the *klu-mo* and *mkha' 'gro* from the left shoulder. Lama Thub-bstan taught him how to distinguish between the *lha* and *'dre* (good and bad spirits). He also instructed him on how to recognize the various deities in the *me-long*, and how to diagnose diseases and other problems using the *me-long*. Karma rig 'dzin declares that at the completion of his four month tutelage with Lama Thub-bstan, he became a fully initiated *lha-pa*.

Karma rig 'dzin observes that his father was a medium for an entity called 'Bum-rdza but because this was a *mi-shis btsan-skyes* (a person dies a *btsan* is born) type spirit, Lama Thub-bstan forbade him to embody it. Karma rig 'dzin learned about the pantheon of deities and their various residences largely from his father (who died when he was eighteen years old). For instance his father explained that Gangs-ri lha-btsan was the deity of the upper regions, rTa-rgo the deity of the middle regions, Thang-lha the god of the lower regions, and sPom-ra was the god who ruled over the lowest regions (of the Tibetan Plateau). Between age fifteen and sixteen, Karma rig 'dzin was in the rTa-rgo region with his father on pilgrimage. He was intent on visiting Shod-tram phug, the cave sacred to the spirit-mediums on the inner (eastern) flanks of Ngo-dmar lha-btsan. He says that initially, he was prevented from entering Shod-tram phug

by the rTa-rgo deities so he performed several times in the general vicinity. He believes that he was then recognized as a *lha-pa* by the rTa-rgo deities and permitted to enter the cave. Inside he found the seat and altar of O-rgyan padma 'byung-gnas (Gu-ru rin-po-che), and the seat of Ngo-dmar lha-btsan. Karma rig 'dzin was unable to take these seats so he made his altar before them. He notes that by going into trance in Shod-tram phug a spirit-medium's practice is improved; many however are unable to gain access to the cave.

As regards the origin of Shod-tram phug, Karma rig 'dzin recounts an old legend that apparently circulated around the region. This tale of the unprecedented defeat of the Vajrayana hero Gu-ru rin-po-che is related to the Bon territorial control of the rTa-rgo region:[147]

> The huge stone forming the roof of Shod-tram phug rests on four boulders. On the ceiling of the cave are the head and shoulder prints of Gu-ru rin-po-che, created when he magically raised the height of the cave to impress the rTa-rgo deities. When Gu-ru rin-po-che reached the region, he met rTa-rgo at rTa-rgo 'phrang (cliffs on south side of Dang-ra g.yu-mtsho). rTa-rgo asked who he was, to which Gu-ru rin-po-che replied that he was a vagrant. The mountain god retorted that he was no such person but rather the master Padma 'byung-gnas, the one responsible for subduing all the *lha-srin sde-brgyad* (orders of elemental spirits). Gu-ru rin-po-che then admitted his true identity. rTa-rgo challenged him to a contest of magic to which he agreed. rTa-rgo told Gu-ru rin-po-che to remain at rTa-rgo 'phrang and that he would try to catch him with his copper lasso. rTa-rgo flew up to his mountain-top palace and threw down his lasso but Gu-ru rin-po-che disappeared into rays of light. Not to be outdone, the mountain god made a lasso of light rays and was successful in binding the Vajrayana master as light rays easily interact with one another. Having bound Gu-ru rin-po-che, rTa-rgo pulled him up to his palace, and the great guru conceded that rTa-rgo was an excellent magician. The mountain deity requested that Gu-ru rin-po-che stay for three years to teach him meditation. rTa-rgo then announced that he was going to build a *mtshams-khang* (meditation house) for him. The mountain god asked that while he was gone Gu-ru rin-po-che remain in his palace and enjoy any of its treasures. The Vajrayana master looked around but he could only find a black cat in a corner. When rTa-rgo returned from his construction project he found Gu-ru rin-po-che staring at the cat and asked what he was looking at. Gu-ru rin-po-che answered that he could

[147] Other legends and myths that establish Bon jurisdiction over rTa-rgo are found in Bellezza 1997, pp. 293–295.

find nothing in the palace but this black cat. rTa-rgo replied, "Although your magical power is very great, you could not find any of my treasures. This black cat is actually a black bear, my *gter-bdag* (treasure guardian), and behind where you are standing are the three keys to treasures." Suffering such a humiliation Gu-ru rin-po-che was unable to open rTa-rgo up as a Buddhist *gnas* (holy place). To demonstrate his power Gu-ru rin-po-che decided to go to Shod-tram phug, the meditation house that rTa-rgo built for him, and raise the ceiling.

Karma rig 'dzin cautions that it is important for a spirit-medium not to wear the clothes of a deceased person or of someone who has committed incest. Pilgrimage to 108 cemeteries, 108 springs, 108 mountains and 108 *mgon-khang* (chapels for protective deities) greatly enhances the power and practice of a *lha-pa*. He adds that he has completed all these pilgrimages save for the 108 cemeteries.

According to Karma rig 'dzin, Gu-ru rin-po-che oversees the proceedings of the trance ceremony, and plays a protective and benedictory role. He is the subject of invocations at the start of the séance. Karma rig 'dzin states that during the trance he has five main protective deities: front—Ma-lus stong-nyid mkha' 'gro (Thorough Emptiness mKha' 'gro); back—dGra-lha gnyan-stag dmar-po (Red Tiger gNyan dGra-lha); right—bTsan-rgod jag-pa me-len, left—mGon-po ber-nag (Black Cloak mGon-po); and overhead—Lha-chen tshangs-pa (Brahma).

Earlier, Karma rig 'dzin used the customary three *me-long* (*phyi-gling, bar-gling, nang-gling*) but these and his other ritual implements (some of which came from Lama Thub-bstan) were confiscated during the Chinese Cultural Revolution. He was also imprisoned at that time. Karma rig 'dzin now makes do with one *me-long* divided into three concentric *gling*.

According to Karma rig 'dzin, the *phyi-gling* is where the mountain divinities gNyan-chen thang-lha and rMa-chen spom-ra, as well the 80 *rgya-gar lha*, headed by the *grub-chen* (great adepts) Thang-stong rgyal-po and Sa-ra-ha, assemble. He maintains that in general, the 80 *rgya-gar* spirits do not possess him but rather serve a protective function at the séance and provide *sngags* (spells) for the healing of certain types of wounds. He states that some of the *rgya-gar* are Indian *gzhi-bdag* who work to defend Buddhism. Among them are rGya-gar cam-cam bla-ma, rGya-gar yar-rtse'i bla-ma, rGya-gar yar-rtse'i dbu-dkar bla-ma, rGya-gar me-ri dmar-po, rGya-gar A-tsa-ra sngon-po, and rGya-gar chos-bsgrub bla-ma. However, Karma rig 'dzin does

not know where these deities reside nor anything about their origins.[148] He believes that there are two *rgya-gar* deities involved in possession: A tsa-ra sngon-po (in handicapped cases) and rGya-gar ri-bkra mchor-po (in a variety of diseases). The latter has two special remedial deities: sPyang-gdong sngon-po (Blue Wolf Face) and 'Ug-gu mchu-ring (Long Beak Owl). In lieu of their curative function, the *rgya-gar* group is offered incense and *gser-skyems* (libations) during the trance ceremony.

Karma rig 'dzin tells that the *bar-gling* is for the hosts of *btsan*. These include the Rol-pa skya-bdun or 'Bar-ba spun-bdun, which reside on a mountain in Nag-tshang (Nyi-ma county) called Zangs-ri (Copper Mountain). According to him, other *btsan* are rTa-rgo ngo-dmar lha-btsan, Gangs-ri lha-btsan, Nam-ra, Go-ra (*btsan* mountain in gNam-ru), and bSam-yas bshan-pa dmar-po. Karma rig 'dzin's most frequent possessing deity, the protector of the sTag-lung subsect, bDud-btsan dmar-po also takes up residence in the *bar-gling*, as does dGra-lha gnyan-stag dmar-po.

Karma rig 'dzin reports that the *nang-gling* is the convocation site for the various orders of *klu-mo* and *mkha' 'gro-ma*. Karma rig 'dzin has five main *mkha' 'gro*, pacific deities that protect him and the activities of the trance ceremony. He also notes that they also dispense benedictions as do lamas. Called the mKha' 'gro sde-lnga, this diverse group includes rGyang-grags mkha' 'gro (of the eponymous monastery located in the inner circuit of Gangs ti-se), dPal-ldan dung-skyong lha-mo, 'Bri-gung A-phyi chos-sgron, mKha' 'gro ye-shes mtsho-rgyal (consort of Gu-ru rin-po-che), and mKha' 'gro 'brong gi dbang-po. Karma rig 'dzin claims that in addition to the mKha' 'gro sde-lnga, there are 1500 other *mkha' 'gro* that appear in the *nang-gling*. He says that these constitute the circle of A-ne gung-sman rgyal-mo, a pacific deity mounted on a lion (in the retinue of dPal-ldan lha-mo). She is said to wear a golden *rigs-lnga* and brocades made of precious substances. In her left hand she holds a *dril-bu* (Buddhist bell) and in her right a *ḍa-ma-ru*. She has rainbow-colored boots and tucked in her sash is a *rkang-gling* (thigh bone trumpet).

[148] The identity of the *gzhi-bdag* component of the *rgya-gar* group is particularly enigmatic. It would appear that they are either ancient deities of Himalayan origin or the protective spirits of early Indian Buddhist masters.

Karma rig 'dzin states that his most important possessing deity is bDud-btsan dmar-po, the great sTag-lung bka' brgyud protector.[149] He is said to ride a black horse. In his right hand, he grasps the reins of his horse and in his left hand he holds aloft an iron *mdung-dar* (spear with flag). Moreover, Karma rig 'dzin envisions bDud-btsan dmar-po as attired in a copper helmet and armor, and with a tiger-skin quiver and leopard-skin bow case.

Karma rig 'dzin is unequivocal: the mountain gods that possess him do so to help patients. He adds that if they are unable or unwilling to provide assistance they will refer patients to a lama, *sngags-pa* or medical doctor. Karma rig 'dzin alleges that during séances involving gNyan-chen thang-lha, this mountain god remains on the crown of his head directing the activities of his circle of deities. According to him, the possessing members of gNyen-chen thang-lha's retinue include:

1) Thang-sras mchor-po (especially efficacious in childhood diseases).
2) Thang-lha yar-bzhur, an infrequent possessor who Karma rig 'dzin considers a minister (mainly functions to cure swelling conditions).
3) Thang-lha'i g.yag-gshog gwa-pa (White-Faced Wild Yak of Thang-lha, effective in preventing the loss of cattle and to increase the numbers of yaks).
4) Thang-lha'i lha-lug gwa-pa (White-Faced Divine Sheep of Thang-lha, effective in preventing the loss of sheep and to increase the size of the sheep flocks).

These possessing forms of Thang-lha can employ Thang-lha khyi-rgod rag-pa as a remedial spirit who is said to be able to cure rabies, the dangerous disease known as *sa-btsog* and certain arthritic ailments.

Karma rig 'dzin states that another deity that possesses him is rTa-rgo ngo-dmar lha-btsan. His remedial spirits are Khyi-rgod rag-pa, Wa-skya lag-dkar (Light Gray Fox with White Paws) and Dom-nag mchor-po (Handsome Black Bear). The *lha-pa* believes that these three helping spirits are effective in a variety of diseases. The possessing deity Rol-pa skya-bdun/'Bar-ba spun-bdun has Zangs-ri me-ri 'khyug-chen (Rapid Movement Fire Mountain Copper Mountain)

[149] For a doctrinal assessment of this deity see Part Two, section i, pp. 58–63.

as its remedial spirit. Karma rig 'dzin shares that Gangs-ri lha-btsan is his *skyes-lha* (birthplace god) and only very infrequently takes possession of him. Another possessing deity is one of the *btsan* protectors of bSam-yas monastery, bSam-yas bshan-pa dmar-po. Karma rig 'dzin relates that possession of this god occurs when patients suffer from a lethal condition. He envisages bSam-yas bshan-pa dmar-po as riding a red horse with a white muzzle, white spot on the forehead and white hoofs. He wears a copper helmet and armor, and holds a copper lasso in his right hand and a red *mdung-dar* in his left. The bSam-yas *lha 'khor* also includes Pe-har, the *bshan-pa* (butcher) deities, and bSam-yas 'brong-dur (bSam-yas Cemetery Wild Yak), a helping spirit that cures cattle diseases.

Although Karma rig 'dzin points out that he is not possessed by the *btsan* Go-ra and Nam-ra during séances he has seen their remedial spirits in his *bar-gling*. They are Thog-khyi dmar-po (Red Thunderbolt Dog) and Zangs-khyi dmar-po (Red Copper Dog) respectively.

Karma rig 'dzin claims that for a horse disease known as *rta-khyung nad*, he is possessed by manifestations of rTa-mgrin, the horse-headed Buddhist *yi-dam*, and that at that time he conducts a *gsol-kha* (propitiation ritual) directed towards rTa-mgrin. He thinks that there are three manifestations of rTa-mgrin involved: Khro-bo rta-mgrin dmar-po, Se-ra'i rta-mgrin and bKa' phrung drag-btsan. In this *gsol-kha* ritual a *rdo-rje* is used.

Karma rig 'dzin uses his *ḍa-ma-ru*, drum, *gshang*, and *zangs-gling* (copper horn) to call both the patron and possessing deities to the trance venue. Before the Chinese Cultural Revolution, he used the *rigs-lnga* headdress but since then he has been unable to obtain another one. He reports that its *gshog-khra* (multi-colored wings) were ornamented with the watchful eyes of the *khyung*. The right *gshog-khra* symbolized the tiger *'jibs-spyang* (helping spirit) while the left *gshog-khra* symbolized the wolf *'jibs-spyang*. Now he uses just the *btsan-zhwa*, the red peaked cap decorated with the eyes of the *btsan*. For some trances he uses a plume of *thang-dkar* (lammergeier) feathers on his *btsan-zhwa*. Karma rig 'dzin states that the *thang-dkar* is the bird of the *lha* and the representative of the mKha' 'gro sde-lnga. Another type of headdress he has worn is called *lha-thod*, a kind of kerchief that wraps once around the head from which cowry shells hang. According to Karma rig 'dzin, *lha-pa* once used helmets, armor, spears, and bow and arrows in their trances. He notes that the *lha*

have white weapons, the *btsan* red weapons, and the *klu* turquoise colored armor and armaments.

Karma rig 'dzin states that invocations for the trance ceremony begin with the figures who exercise an officiating and benedictory role and are generally mentioned in the following order: Gu-ru rin-po-che, Zhi-ba drag-po gsang-ba gsum (the pacific, wrathful and secret retinue of Gu-ru rin-po-che), His Holiness the Dalai Lama, His Holiness the Karma-pa, His Holiness the Sa-skya gong-ma, the Paṇ-chen bla-ma, and rGyal-tshab rin-po-che. After his donning of the *btsan-zhwa,* these invocations are followed by those to Lha-chen tshangs-pa (chief of the *lha*), gNyan-chen sku-lha sger-mdzod (sp.?) (chief of the *dgra-lha*) and Klu gtsug-na rin-chen (chief of the *klu*). Karma rig 'dzin is under the impression that the entire pantheon of the three planes of existence is subsumed under the leadership of these latter three deities, explaining their importance to the ceremony. He observes that the palace of Lha-chen tshangs-pa is located on gNyan-chen thang-lha while the one for gNyan-chen sku-lha is found on a locale between Thang-lha and Thang-sras mchor-po. Other invocations are for the *rgya-gar* group.

Karma rig 'dzin asserts that at the moment of possession, the deity's *'od-zer* (radiant consciousness) enters him while his *'od-zer* is simultaneously transferred to the *bar-gling* for safe-keeping, for the duration of the trance. He professes that the *'od-zer* of the *lha* is white, the *'od-zer* of the *btsan* yellow, the *'od-zer* of the *mkha' 'gro* green, and that the *'od-zer* of the *klu-mo* is blue. He further remarks that as all these deities are present at the trance a rainbow light descends upon the venue.

Karma rig 'dzin holds that harmful forces and elemental spirits are either *'dul-ba* (subdued) or *zlog-pa* (repelled) or in some cases, bound to an oath to protect the Buddhist doctrine. When the *sa-bdag* and twelve *brtan-ma* goddesses are the source of problems they can be appeased through offerings (*bskang-ba*). However, when the *klu, gnyan, the'u-rang, 'byung-po*[150] and *bram-ze* (demons in guise of brahmins) spirits are at the root of sickness they must be subdued (*thul-ba*).

Karma rig 'dzin insists that the circles of Dang-ra g.yu-mtsho and Ma-pham g.yu-mtsho do not possess him; however, they participate in the *klu-gsol* ritual. Under the leadership of the *brtan-ma* goddess rDo-rje kun-grags ma,[151] members of gNam-mtsho-phyug-mo's entourage often take possession of the spirit-medium to conduct the *klu-gsol,* which has both an apotropaic and fortune-bestowing function. The possessing forms of gNam-mtsho include gSer-khrab phyug-mo (Golden Cuirass Riches Woman), Dung-khrab phyug-mo (Conch Cuirass Riches Lady), Me-tog g.yang-mdzes (Beautiful Good Fortune Flower), and Sa yi klu dung-skyong dkar-mo (Klu of the Earth White Conch Protectress).

[150] Probably analogous with the Indian *bhuta* demons (Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 300), which haunt charnel grounds.

Karma rig 'dzin states that when the female retinues of gNam-mtsho, Dang-ra g.yu-mtsho and Ma-pham g.yu-mtsho create difficulties for a person they can be the object of a *klu-gsol* ritual. For instance, the *mo-lha* (personal deity of females) often belongs to the retinues of the great lake goddesses, and if angered or defiled she can bring sickness and misfortune to a household. Karma rig 'dzin notes that the *klu-gsol* is held while he is in trance. He affirms that the presents offered during the *klu-gsol* are conveyed to the lake spirits by the great goddess dPal-ldan skyong-ma (dPal-ldan lha-mo). Karma rig 'dzin cites that for the *klu-gsol* an incense mixture containing *spang-spos* (*Nardostachys grandiflora*), *phur-mong* (probably *Micromeri tarosma*), *ba-lu* (*Rhododendron primulaeflorum*), *sro-lo* (probably *Rhodiola crenulata*), and *rtswa ku-sha* (*Thysanolaena maxima*) is used to propitiate the deities. Also needed for the ritual is the milk of either a white yak, orange goat or white-faced sheep. This milk is placed in a vessel with the *phyi-gling* and covered with a piece of cloth. The *mda' dar* is placed on top of the vessel. Invocations are then recited to the presiding deity, which is either a member of gNam-mtsho phyug-mo's retinue, a *mkha' 'gro* or a deity in the circle of dMag-zor rgyal-mo. After the prayers the *phyi-gling* is removed from the vessel and the milk stirred. Then the milk is spooned on to the *phyi-gling* and allowed to drop back into the vessel. The resultant liquid is given to patients to drink as well as sprinkled upon them. Karma rig 'dzin says that it is also added to various springs, resulting in rain within 24 hours, thus the *klu-gsol* is highly effective in times of drought.

Karma rig 'dzin discloses that when a patient has become ill due to an angry *pho-lha,* a *lha-gsol* ritual is held to pacify it. For the

[151] The chief of the brTan-ma bcu-gnyis, a group of twelve powerful territorial goddesses primarily of Byang-thang origin. For a review of this goddess see Bellezza 1997, pp. 107, 127, 128 (fns. 22–25); Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, pp. 181–198.

lha-gsol the possessing deity is usually one of the mountain gods in the circle of Thang-lha or sPom-ra but other deities can also be involved. The *lha-gsol* entails the burning of incense and *gser-skyems* (libations offerings). Karma rig 'dzin may also prescribe the erection of a new *mda' dar* on the patient's altar and the wearing of new clothes. Another aspect of the *lha-gsol*, especially for dying people, is the freeing of animals (*tshe-thar*), particularly an old goat. *Tshe-thar* can also be prescribed for *bar-chad* (obstacles to a person's health and happiness) conditions. To appease the anger of a *phugs-lha* (identical or closely related to the *pho-lha*) specially colored livestock are gifted to it. According to Karma rig 'dzin, these divine animals constitute a separate category of offering from the *tshe-thar*. If the *phugs-lha* of the patient is gNyan-chen thang-lha or the white form of rTa-rgo, the possessing deity prescribes a white yak or white sheep. For *btsan phugs-lha* such as rTa-rgo lha-btsan and Jag-pa me-len, a *lug dmar-rtsa* (sheep with a reddish face) and an all-red goat or a *g.yag kham-pa* (bay-colored yak) are gifted to the *phugs-lha*. Bluish female yaks, sheep and goats are offered to *phugs-lha* that are *klu-mo*. If a patient has no livestock, he is directed by the possessing deity to offer a *mda' dar* to his *phugs-lha*.

Karma rig 'dzin observes that another healing ritual performed in trance by bDud-btsan dmar-po is the *tshe 'gugs* (long life summoning), which entails the mediation of the possessing deity with the patient's *tshe-lha* (long life god). For this ritual a turquoise, two pieces of coral and a conch are provided by the patient. The *tshe 'gugs* is designed to establish a harmonious relationship between the *phugs-lha* and *tshe-lha*. It can also entice a patient's *bla* to return if it has been errant. Karma rig 'dzin maintains that a patient whose *bla* is wandering has no *rlung-rta*, the force regulated by the *dgra-lha* that makes a person lucky and successful. During the ritual the possessing deity bDud-btsan dmar-po invokes the Tshe-lha rnam-gsum (Longevity Triad, consisting of Tshe-dpag-med, sGrol-dkar and rNam-rgyal-ma). By using the jewels provided, the possessing deity convinces the *phugs-lha* and *tshe-lha* to dwell cooperatively with the patient.

Karma rig 'dzin says that he performs a ritual for newlyweds called *lha-khro klu-dogs* (angry god anxious *klu*) in order to harmonize the respective family protectors. For the ritual the groom must bring a white *kha-btags* (scarf) and the bride a blue *kha-btags*. He affirms that the reconciliation of the protectors occurs when he affixes the two scarves to the couple's *mda 'dar*. Karma rig 'dzin states that the

possessing deities at the *lha-khro klu-dogs* belong to the circles of Thang-lha and sPom-ra; alternatively, the ritual is performed by a *rgya-gar* deity or bDud-btsan dmar-po.

Karma rig 'dzin explains that the main types of *grib* causing sickness are: *sme-grib* (pollution resulting from incest, murder, etc.), *shi-grib* (pollution resulting from being in contact with dying people), *ro-grib* (pollution resulting from contact with corpses), *nyams-grib* (pollution caused by eating meat from animals killed by carnivores), *btsog-grib* (pollution from contaminated water and earth and diseased meat), *gza' grib* (pollution created by bad planetary alignments), and *dam-grib* (pollution resulting from breaking religious vows). Karma rig 'dzin mainly uses his *zangs-gling* (copper horn) to suck out *grib* from the bodies of patients. He says that this method of healing is best suited for the *sa-btsog* disease, rabies and *gza' grib*. Although the sucking method is effective in other types of *grib*, Karma rig 'dzin advises against it because it can drain patients of their vital energy like that bound up with beneficial 'insects'. These include *lus 'bu* (insect that regulates growth), *bsod-nams 'bu* (insect that ensures good luck), *dbang-thang 'bu* (insect that regulates abilities).

Karma rig 'dzin states that another method of cleansing *grib* is *khrus-chu*, a concoction of various indigenous herbs and different colored flowers. This liquid is placed in a vessel in which a *me-long* is added. If the procedure to make it has been successful, the *khrus-chu* will be multi-colored in sunlight, representing the different classes of deities. When sprinkled on patients the *khrus-chu* is also effective in pacifying an angry *pho-lha*.

Karma rig 'dzin avers that while he is in trance he uses a mixture of white, red and black sand, white, red and black crushed stones, and *A-gar-ru* (*Aquilaria*) for removing harm caused by the *mgon-po, rgyal-po, the'u-rang, bram-ze,* and *mi-shis btsan-skyes* type demons. This mixture is thrown on patients to exorcise harmful influences and demons. For the very weak however, this exorcistic method cannot be used and the *mda' dar* is employed instead. The *mda' dar*[152] is waved over the patient, thereby exorcising the demons and effecting a cure. The *mda' dar* is also used to whack and stab at afflicting

[152] It consists of a bamboo shaft with an arrow-point on which various colored clothes, and a sling with the *chu-mig dgu-sgril* (a braiding technique with 'eyes', a symbol of the *dgra-lha*) are attached.

agents. Karma rig 'dzin reports that a *mdung-dar* (lance with flag) was once used by spirit-mediums for the same purpose.

Karma rig 'dzin also says that he practices a wrathful ritual known as *sri-gnon* (pressing down the *sri*) to eliminate misfortunes caused by the pernicious *sri* demons. A narrow hole one cubit in depth is dug, and nine different women spin wool yarn of nine different colors. While in trance, he ties nine knots, spaced three fingers apart in the string braided from the nine pieces of yarn. Each knot is sealed with *la-cha* (shellac), symbolizing that the *sri* is bound and sealed and thus they cannot cause any more trouble. The nine knots symbolize that the offending *sri* will be bound for nine years, nine months and nine days. The string is tied around a black cloth covering a fox skull.[153] The *sri*, are forced into this ritual prison by invoking the rGyal-ba rigs-lnga Buddhas. During the *sri-gnon* the various types of *sri* demons are named as a prelude to their imprisonment. According to Karma rig 'dzin, each group of *sri* is neutralized and defeated by a special deity that is invoked during the ceremony:

Pho-sri gsad-gar gyi gdong (Face of Slaughtering Dance Sri of Males) defeated by bDud-btsan dmar-po.

Mo-sri rgya-mtsho 'gram (Ocean Shore Sri of Females) defeated by dMag-zor rgyal-mo.

Chung-sri chu-mo'i 'gram (Edge of the Spring Sri of Children) defeated by Thang-sras mchor-po.

Than-sri than-pa'i 'og (Drought Below Sri of Drought) defeated by the *klu-mo* (?).

sGo-sri go-kha'i 'gram (Berm of the Hearth Sri of Livestock) is defeated by Thang-lha'i lha-g.yag dkar-po.

Phugs-sri dar-lcog 'og (Below the Prayer Flag Mast Sri of Domestic Affairs) is defeated by gNyan-chen thang-lha and other *lha*.

dGra-sri la-btsas 'og (Below the Cairn Sri of the Enemy) defeated by dGra-lha gnyan-stag dmar-po.

Once the *sri* are defeated and imprisoned the fox skull is buried in the hole dug for this purpose.

During my visit, Karma rig 'dzin graciously agreed to go into trance and allow it to be photographed. It was decided that the purpose

[153] For analogous rituals conducted to counteract the malignant influence of the *sri* see Nebesky-Wojokowitz 1956, pp. 516–518.

of the trance was to divine the ongoing success of the autumn phase of my High Tibet Circle Expedition, launched in collaboration with the Tibetan Academy of Social Sciences. I had hoped to document a healing ritual, but a suitable patient could not be located in time. Karma rig 'dzin warned that the deities could not be summoned for inconsequential or whimsical purposes and that our only alternative was to perform a divination. The material aspects of the trance ceremony were rudimentary, reflecting the *lha-pa*'s modest economic position. The possessing deity was bDud-btsan dmar-po, who speaks in *dbus-skad* (central Tibetan dialect). Other deities are said to speak in strange dialects thus necessitating an interpreter (usually one of Karma rig 'dzin's close friends).

19:00: Preparations for the trance begin. Karma rig 'dzin hangs his drum on a line that is suspended from the rafters of his tiny one-room house. The altar is a wooden crate that also suffices for everyday religious use. A cloth on which much barleycorn is sprinkled covers the altar. On the altar are three vessels of water, one vessel of black tea, the *gling* and another *me-long* that are placed one in front of the other and embedded in a heaped plate of barleycorn, butter lamps, a small stone in the form of gNyan-chen thang-lha, and two other sacred stones. No photographs are used at the ceremony. After arranging his altar, Karma rig 'dzin dons a red shirt and the peaked brocade *bsang-zhwa* (incense hat).

19:18: Karma rig 'dzin lights the butter lamps and begins his prayers while his wife burns juniper incense. He starts playing his *gshang* and drum.

19:19: Karma rig 'dzin blows the *zangs-gling* three times. Invocations to Thang-lha, the *mkha' 'gro* and a host of other indigenous deities are made while facing in an eastern direction. The dominant subjects are Thang-lha and the *dgra-lha*. During these invocations he plays his *gshang* and drum quite briskly.

19:27: The *lha-pa* places his *gshang* down and bangs more slowly and deliberately on the drum. Invocations still stress the indigenous pantheon of Upper Tibet.

19:31: Various lamas are invoked.

19:35: Karma rig 'dzin stops playing his drum. He waves his *mda' dar* aloft and sprinkles barleycorn around the room. His wife takes a vessel of water from the altar and offers it outside to the deities. He now waves his *mda' dar* while exclaiming, *ki ki bswo bswo* (heralds the deities).

19:37: Karma rig 'dzin picks up his *btsan-zhwa* and holds it over his face while reciting prayers to Gu-ru rin-po-che, the Buddhas, Karma-pa, and other lamas.

19:39: He places *btsan-zhwa* on his head and slings *mda' dar* over his left shoulder.

19:40: Karma rig 'dzin plays his drum and *gshang*. His speech becomes more song-like.

19:42: Pace of playing intensifies and his head begins to rock back and forth.

19:44: I later confirm that possession is thought to occur as Karma rig 'dzin jumps up to his knees. He chants praises to the indigenous deities without musical instruments, facing in a southern direction. His voice has a shallow quality to it. The main groups of *btsan* and *klu* of gNam-mtsho and Thang-lha are invoked, as are Dang-ra g.yu-mtsho, rTa-rgo and bDud-btsan dmar-po. The *lha-pa* relates that these are the protectors of the north. He mentions that Ge-sar is the hero of the world. The *rgya-gar* gods including Sa-ra-ha and the *mkha' 'gro* are also invoked. The primordial nature of the deities and their protective functions are noted.

19:54: My Tibetan colleague offers a *kha-btags* to Karma rig 'dzin, who then addresses him with a number of questions in a deep, authoritative tone. Speaking close to his drum, which causes his voice to resonate, he says, "Why have you come here today? Where are you from? What do you want?" My colleague replied that we are researching sacred mountains and that he resides in Lhasa. The *lha-pa* reacted by saying, "But where are you originally from?" The appropriate answer is given. Karma rig 'dzin then demanded to know why we were inquiring about the history of *lha-pa*, lamas and old men. My colleague answered that I am writing a book about Tibetan history. The spirit-medium rejoined, "Who is it for?" and my colleague answered, "For people at university." The medium retorted, "Where were you during the ten years of prosecution?" Karma rig 'dzin then speaks of the Chinese Elephant Mountain of 'Jam-dpal dbyangs, and the Ri-bo mched-lnga (Five Marchmounts of China). He enjoins, "Now that Tibet is part of China, it is imperative that the laws of China are followed." The *lha-pa* then proclaims that the Tibetans are descended form the Brag srin-mo and Bodhisattva, the head of the *lha* is Ge-sar, the head of the *btsan* is Gangs-ri lha-btsan, and the leader of religion is Gu-ru rin-po-che. Finally, he pronounces that our expedition would be successful in all ways, and that he (bDud-btsan dmar-po) would talk to Gangs-ri lha-btsan on our behalf.

20:02: Karma rig 'dzin resumes playing the drum and *gshang*. He holds both the *gshang* and *mda' dar* in his left hand. His voice has a song-like quality and his head shakes wildly.

20:04: Suddenly all activity stops, marking the end of the trance. He sits motionless for about one minute. Then, as he removes his costume, he asks about his performance.

xv) *Pho-bo chu-bzang, born circa 1924*

Interviewed in Brag-po township, sGer-rtse, October 11, 2002.

Pho-bo chu-bzang is held in high esteem and regarded with a certain amount of awe, in northern sGer-rtse county. He is reported to be the senior-most *lha-pa* of the region. Pho-bo chu-bzang is a highly pious and reticent man, and he normally does not meet with anyone but his close family members. Visitors are discouraged from seeing him except when in dire need of his services. Pho-bo chu-bzang however, kindly agreed to be interviewed for this book.

Pho-bo chu-bzang reports that in his paternal clan (Phyug-tshang) there have been spirit-mediums for nine generations. He says that his grandfather Padma and his paternal uncle dKar-bsam were mediums for the same deities as himself: rTa-rgo ngo-dmar lha-btsan and Rol-pa skya-bdun. None of his eight children work as spirit-mediums. Pho-bo chu-bzang says that he knows few details about his family because his father died when he was fifteen years old, and soon thereafter his mother and sisters left their native region (mTsho-khrid, western Nag-tshang) on pilgrimage to Gangs rin-po-che. On the way back, his sisters married in sGer-rtse, so he settled there as well. He has lived in various parts of Brag-po township before moving to his present location about ten years ago.

Pho-bo chu-bzang states that the deities of his paternal lineage first possessed him at age eighteen. He says that he was aided by a lama in sGer-rtse named Karma yon-tan, also known as Bla-chen rin-po-che. Bla-chen rin-po-che diagnosed that he was being visited by authentic deities. He performed the *rtsa-sgo phye-ba* ceremony for Pho-bo chu-bzang, which consisted of ablutions, consecration and binding the ring fingers while conducting a *gcod* ritual. The lama informed Pho-bo chu-bzang that after three days he could remove

the strings on his fingers and begin working as a *lha-pa*. Although they only spent a very short time together, Bla-chen rin-po-che was of great benefit to Pho-bo chu-bzang. According to Pho-bo chu-bzang, he was also assisted by a *lha-pa* from northern sGer-rtse slightly older then himself named bDe-ba, a medium for bDe-skyid rkyang-khra (rKyang-khra). bDe-ba helped teach him how to distinguish between the *lha* and *'dre*, and how to ascertain what *gnod-pa* (harm) was afflicting a patient. bDe-ba passed away several years ago.

Pho-bo chu-bzang says that in his early years, he went into trance 30 or 40 times a year. During the Chinese Cultural Revolution, his practice was proscribed and his ritual paraphernalia confiscated. He testifies that he did not suffer physical abuse but had to undergo a number of indoctrination sessions to bring him around to the new social and political philosophy. Pho-bo chu-bzang reports suffering from a neurological condition characterized by dizziness since that time. He says that this illness has had a profound impact on his practice as a *lha-pa*. Pho-bo chu-bzang believes that it was caused by his inability to channel the deities during the Chinese Cultural Revolution, and the contamination that resulted from being subjected to work such as digging holes. He now admits to going into trance very infrequently, in part due to his advanced age. Even when he does perform, the patient must erect his own tent on his premises and has no direct contact with him. Pho-bo chu-bzang states that he performs the trance in a solitary fashion in his own tent.

Like most of the other elderly *lha-pa* of Upper Tibet, Pho-bo chu-bzang is illiterate and conducts all invocations to the deities by memory. He says that it is only when possessed that he can describe the appearance of the deities. He affirms that the main function of possession is to cure the ailments of people and livestock. Pho-bo chu-bzang notes that at the beginning of the ceremony prayers are said to the Buddha, Gu-ru rin-po-che and his consort Ye-shes mtsho-rgyal, dPal-ldan lha-mo, and sGrol-ma. He says that these deities protect and oversee the trance ceremony, and insure that it is auspicious. Pho-bo chu-bzang uses a *ḍa-ma-ru* and *sil-snyen* (flat-bell similar to the *gshang*). He believes that the deities who possess him enter through the thumb and ring finger while he plays these instruments. He adds that at the moment of possession, his *sems-blo* (consciousness) is conveyed to the *lha-yul* (celestial realm of the gods) for safekeeping until the termination of the trance.

Pho-bo chu-bzang reports that he used to have a *me-long*, which

he called *tshogs-ra* (gathering place) but he no longer has one. He says that the *'od-zer* of the deities directly descends on his *rigs-lnga* headdress. When he was young, a plume of *thang-dkar* feathers—a fortune-bestowing device—crowned his headdress. Under his *rigs-lnga* he wears a red kerchief called a *thod*, and he says preliminary prayers with just this.[154] Pho-bo chu-bzang notes that his wife's *mo-lha* helps in the ceremony as a healer and protector. Other unnamed *klu-mo* also act as curative deities. He alleges that his *phugs-lha*, gTo-btsan gnam-lha dkar-po, also serves as a healer and protector at the trance, but if for some reason it does not like a patient a cure is not possible. The sucking out of *grib* is carried out by a *bya-khyung*, the mythical horned eagle deity. Pho-bo chu-bzang says that the *'jibs* (sucking) technique used to be done with white wool placed between the mouth of the *lha-pa* and patient but that now *kha-btags* scarves are commonly used.

Pho-bo chu-bzang observes that when he is possessed, he summons the demons and negative influences harming a patient with a horn made from the rear thigh bone of an *gnyan* (argali). He explains that these forces are appeased and enticed with offerings to stop their disservice, or dispelled using mantras. He uses mantras to empower black sand while it is being heated. This sand can be thrown on patients or applied to wounds, swellings and infections. Pho-bo chu-bzang observes that in the past, he would visit a flock of sheep suffering from an epidemic and, while in trance, scatter this sand (which he had prepared earlier) on the animals. He also uses mantras to empower clay pellets called *za-sngags*. The clay used for this purpose must be gathered from a special place. It is then mixed with water and rolled into small balls. Pho-bo chu-bzang would then say mantras over them while in trance and distribute them to his patients. He believes that *za-sngags* are effective in a wide range of disorders. He also thinks that cures can be effected by *bkab-mgo*, the touching of a patient's head with the *ḍa-ma-ru* or *sil-snyen*. *bDug-pa* (fumigation) using juniper, *gangs-spos* (a herb found around Gangs ti-se) and other aromatic substances is another healing technique of the trance. A lustral liquid called *dkar-khrus*, made

[154] The name of this head covering and other evidences we have examined indicate that this kerchief is a vestigial turban. It is often used alone by the *lha-pa* of Upper Tibet when saying preliminary prayers.

from milk and water, is sprinkled on livestock to rid them of disease. Pho-bo chu-bzang explains that in order to make it, milk must be put outside with the appearance of the first star in the evening and kept out until all the other stars appear. It is then brought inside and mixed with herbs and a piece of cloth blessed by one of the possessing deities. Pho-bo chu-bzang notes that while possessed, he occasionally carries out mantic activities using his rosary or dice.

According to Pho-bo chu-bzang, the original four spirit-mediums of Tibet were called Phyogs-bzhi dpa' bo. He had heard that a member of this lineage named rDza-dmar dpa' chen cured a Karma-pa lama from poisoning. Pho-bo chu-bzang reports that several years prior, an eleven year old girl from the township headquarters went missing, and a lama divined that she had been abducted by the *'dre* spirits. After two weeks had passed, local township officials and the girl's family called upon Pho-bo chu-bzang to help find her. He went into trance and wrested the girl back from the *'dre*. The next day she reappeared in the settlement unharmed. Pho-bo chu-bzang also claims that around nine years ago he came down with a life-threatening illness. He went into trance and then took a knife and operated on his sternum. He says that afterwards he did not eat for 28 days and his family thought that he was dying, but slowly he fully recovered.

PART THREE: THE MOUNTAIN AND LAKE DEITIES OF THE SPIRIT-MEDIUMS

i) *gNyan-chen thang-lha*

As we have seen, the mountain god gNyan-chen thang-lha is an important patron deity of the *lha-pa*. Moreover, his sons Thang-sras mchor-po and rDo-rje rkyang-khra, are responsible for a good many trances. gNyan-chen thang-lha is universally viewed as a resplendent white figure, often sitting astride a horse, in the classic iconography of the *lha-ri* (divine mountain) *yul-lha*. As one of Tibet's premier mountain gods, he serves as an archetypal patriarch, warrior and protector of the entire Plateau and particularly for Upper Tibet.

The text entitled *Honors and Praises of Thang-lha*, attributed to the Eighth century Bon master sTong-rgyung mthu-chen, contains a dramatic description of the mountain divinity.[1] gNyan-chen thang-lha is depicted in his indigenous form as the world's chief warrior armed with bow and arrow, and wearing a bird feather on his head.[2] His army of white soldiers yell out the ancient Tibetan battle cry, *ki bso cha*. However, in what appears to be a concession to Buddhist tradition, the explanation of his attributes include reference to *thabs shes* (skillful means and wisdom), precursory conditions for enlightenment:[3]

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[1] The written form of this text is entitled *Thang lha'i mchod stod* (= *bstod*) (New Collection of Bon *bka' brten*, vol. 87, nos. 1421, ln. 3 to 1423, ln. 3). According to its colophon, it was hidden at Sham-po gang (= gangs) and rediscovered by rMa-lha rgod-thog. However, for translation, I have used a transcription of an oral version of the text, which is attributed to sTong-rgyung mthu-chen. The oral text contains a few extra words among the verses and more extensive commands for the deity to carry out. In 1999, I collected it from the bard (local dialect: *spo-spo*), Lhun-grub tshe-ring (born circa 1920) of the Grom-dar clan, in the Bon enclave of sPo-che, gNam-ru (dPal-mgon county). In addition to transmitting local lore, Lhun-grub tshe-ring was a spirit-medium for Ge-sar until 1959.

[2] The Na-khi *ngaw* (apparently identical with the Tibetan *dgra-lha*) wear the feathers of eagles and black vultures in their helmets, and carry swords and eagle claws as weapons (Rock 1972: Plate XXXVI).

[3] The physical appearance and attire of Zhang-zhung masters have also been amalgamated to the Buddhist-like higher teachings of Bon. For example, the great rDzogs-chen master, Li-shu stag-ring is described as such: "His youthfulness and lustrous reddish brown body complexion is a sign of the restraining of the living beings under his guidance through his majesty. His handsome full moon magnificent

> You Thang-lha yar-bzhur of Tibet ride a light orange horse.[4] On your person you wear yellow golden armor. On your head you have a golden helmet with the bird feather of the rising sun. In your hands you hold the bow of wisdom and the arrow of skillful means. On your right side you lead a female dragon and on your left is zigzagging lightning. A white lioness follows you. Soaring overhead is a golden *khyung*. A retinue of one hundred thousand *gnyan* soldiers surrounds you. You send as your attendants the one hundred thousand sons of the *gnyan*, white men on white horses, holding white banners aloft. They are yelling *ki bso cha*. The mountains fall down by the sound of the hoofs of their racing horses. They make the sky and earth quake. In ancient times you were the *lha* allies of Bon.

In this section, three more texts are presented that describe the personality of Thang-lha and his extensive circle of deities in some detail.[5] A study of the mountain god's entourage is pertinent in understanding his geographic scope, and the breadth of iconographic forms used in possession. Let us first peruse a text of protective deities of which gNyan-chen thang-lha is a part. It is entitled *Invocations of the Six Very Wrathful[6] Black Dagger Treasure Guards [Who Cut] the Life-force of Oath-Breakers with an Extremely Sharp Sword*, and is attributed to two Eighth century Bon adepts active in the gNyan-chen thang-lha region.[7] This text constitutes an esoteric ritual designed to protect Bon practitioners, especially those who worship Phur-pa as their *yi-dam* (tutelary deity), from physical and spiritual threats.[8] There are significant variations in the ritual structure of the worship of the Bon *yi-dam*, but in general their liturgies in complete form can be outlined as follows:

1) *sTa-gon/sta-bon* (preparation of ritual paraphernalia).
2) *Dug-phyung* (poison smoke used to drive out impurities from ritualists, ritual implements and the site of the ritual).
3) *Tshan-dmar* and *tshan-dkar* (methods of lustration used in conjunction with one another).
4) *sPos* (incense offerings).
5) *Thar-glud sna-sel* (rite to request the ritual space from its owner the *sa-bdag* and *klu*).
6) *Phyi-mtshams* (rite carried out to protect the boundaries of the ritual space by invoking the rGyal-chen-bzhi, the Monarchs of the Cardinal Directions).

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visage is a sign of the dispelling of the darkness of the various types of ignorance. The regal striped brocade *thul* (robe) he wears is a sign of clearly seeing from primordial times phenomena unobscured [by illusion]. The reddish brown *'ob* (perhaps a fox) hat he wears on his head is a sign of the full apprehension of the essence of the [Bon] religious systems. The victory point vulture [feather] erected on his hat is a sign of the wisdom of the thorough knowledge of the [rDzogs-chen] view of *ka-dag* (clear and pure nature of the mind). The five different colored cloths hung on this hat is a sign of his realizing through skillful means the five wisdoms." (*sku mdog gzhon tshul smug la dngangs* (= dwangs) *pa ni / gdul bya'i tshogs rnams zil gyis non pa'i brda / gzi byin zhal bzang zla ba rgyas pa ni / ma rig mun pa'i tshogs rnams sel ba'i brda' / sku la za 'og dmar khra'i 'gying thul gsol ba ni / ma sgribs snang ba gdod nas bkra ba'i brda' / dbu la 'ob zhu smug po gsol ba ni / thegs pa'i don rnams dbang du 'dus pa'i brda' / de la rgod kyi rgyal btsug pa ni / ye shes dka'* (= *ka*) *dag lta ba rtogs pa'i brda'/ de la dar tshon sna lnga btags pa ni / ye shes rnam lnga thabs kyis 'tshar ba'i brda'*). See *Kun bzang don gyi 'phrin las* (*Activities of the Essence Kun* [*tu*] *bzang* [*po*]), in the *Yang rtse klong chen sgrub skor volume* (New Collection of Bon *bka' brten*, vol. 92, nos. 695–728), no. 719, lns. 3–6. The text is anonymous.

[4] A word on pronoun selection is in order: I have mostly chosen to render translations in the second and not third form of the personal pronoun (nominative, objective, possessive, intensive and reflexive cases). While the pronoun choice is not often written out in the Tibetan ritual texts, it is understood that the ritualists are directly invoking the deities and thus the use of 'you,' instead of 'he' or 'she' is generally more appropriate.

[5] I have discussed these texts in an earlier publication. See Bellezza 1997, Chapter One.

[6] *dBal*. The word *dbal* is widely used in conjunction with Bon tantric cycles and has the connotations of: very wrathful, very sharp, very pointed, tremendously powerful, decisively cutting, fulminating, blazing, and blinding bright. It is also the name of a class of ireful Bon *yi-dam*, the *dbal-gsas*. As a lexical term, *dbal* is recorded as being the equivalent of *tog* (peak, point) and *rtse-mo* (tip, summit) (Martin 1995, p. 75, fn. 31).

[7] This invocatory text, the *dBal phur nag po'i gter srung drug gi bskul pa dam nyams srog gi spu gri bzhugs so*, is found in the first volume (*stod-cha*) of the Phur-pa cycle (New Collection of Bon *bka' brten*, vol. 244, nos. 785–798). The colophon of the text informs us: "[Written by] Pha [ba] khri-snyan rgyal-chung and sTong-rgyung mthu-chen for future practitioners. Khu-tsha [zla 'od] (born 1024)* took it out from (discovered it at) sPa-gro phug-gcal and gave it to mGar-ston [khro-rgyal] who passed it on to various scholars of the Me [clan], and then it went successively through the [Bon] lineage." (*pha khri snyan rgyal chung / stong rgyung mthu chen gyis phyi rabs kyi don du mdzad pa'o / spa gro phug gcal nas khu tsha'i* (= *tshas*) *bton nas mgar ston la babs / me ston rnams kyi* (= *kyis*) *rim bzhin du brgyud do*). There are five deities preceding gNyan-chen thang lha (nos. 795–798) in the text: 1) 'Jig-rten bdag-mo stong-khyab-ma, 2) sKyin-mthing g.ya' ma, 3) gSang-ba rin-chen srog gi bdag, 4) sKu-bla drang-skyes, and 5) Yar-lha sham-po.

* He was also a rNying-ma *gter-ston*. According to rNying-ma tradition, the Phur-pa cycle was introduced to Nepal and Tibet by Gu-ru rin-po-che. See Karmay 1998, pp. 135, 136.

[8] In Bon, there are five major *yi-dam*: *sku* (body)—dBal-gsas; *gsung* (speech)—Lha-rgod; *thugs* (mind)—Khro-bo gtso-mchog; *yon-tan* (beneficial qualities)—Ge-khod; and *'phrin-las* (activities)—Phur-pa.

7) *Nang-mtshams* (rite to protect the ritual space by invoking the four *sgo-srung*, the door-keepers of the cardinal directions).
8) *sKyabs 'gro* (includes outer refuge: Sangs-rgyas, Bon and gShen-rabs; inner refuge: *bla-ma*, *yi-dam* and *mkha' 'gro*; and secret refuge: *rtsa*, *rlung* and *thig-le*).
9) *gSol 'debs* (dedicatory prayers to the *yi-dam* of the ritual and the knowledge-holders who have practiced and preserved it).
10) *mNgon-rtogs* (visualization of the mandala of the *yi-dam*).
11) *gDan 'bul* (offering seat of honor to the *yi-dam*).
12) *sPyan 'dren* (invitation to the *yi-dam* to come to the ritual space).
13) *Phyag* (prostrations to the *yi-dam* and lineage lamas for assistance and purification).
14) *bShags-pa* (confession to the *yi-dam*, lineage lamas and *mkha' 'gro* by the ritualists, for themselves and on behalf of all living beings).
15) *gSang-mtshams* (rite to subdue the inner obscurations of the ritualists that could affect the efficacy of the ritual).
16) *gZugs sgra dri ro reg bya* (form, sound, scent, taste and tactile offerings to the *yi-dam*, lineage lamas and protectors).
17) *gTor-ma* and *rakta* (edible sculptures and blood offerings to the same entities).
18) *bDud-rtsi* (nectar offerings to the same entities).
19) *'Dzab* (recitations of the *yi-dam*'s mantras).
20) *'Dzab-bstod* (recitation extolling the virtues of mantras and offerings).
21) *sMan-dngos-grub* (consummation of *bdud-rsti* offering, culminating in its consumption by the ritualists).
22) *sKu-bstod* (description and praises of the *yi-dam*).
23) *Tshogs-dngos-grub* (consummation of offerings of sacred cakes).
24) *sMon-lam* (prayers dedicating the ritual to all living beings).
25) *Srung-ba* (rite of protection for ritualists and their sponsors so that powerful energies of the invoked deities do not inadvertently harm them).
26) *rNga-rabs* (recitation of the origin and lineage of the drum and sometimes the *rabs* of other ritual implements).
27) *Zlog-pa* (assembly of offerings for repelling negativities and impurities).
28) *bSad-pa* (ritual slaughter of enemies involving *ling-pa*, effigies used to catch the soul and consciousness of enemies).
29) *mNon-pa* (ritual burial of the enemy; demonstrates that all negativities have been eliminated).

Invocations of the Six Very Wrathful Black Dagger Treasure Guards provides what is probably the most detailed Bon description of the theogony, appearance and activities of Thang-lha. It begins with the lineage of deities from which Thang-lha originated (para i). This theogony affirms the generative power of the female *klu* and *sman* and the male *lha*, a native cultural theme usually expressed in terms of a dualistic universe divided into upper and lower spheres. In the oral tradition, the fundamental cosmogonic principles are the male deities of the upper world and the female deities of the underworld, which mate to form the universe or various elements within it. In this textual account the union is couched in the more sophisticated doctrinal language of the joining of minds (*thugs yid 'dres-pa*).

Thang-lha's appearance as a *khyung* in the text (paras i, ii) finds strong resonance in the tradition of spirit-mediumship, whose circle of remedial spirits assume this form. Thang-lha inherits magical tools from his divine grandfather, which appear to have a protective and lineage-identifying function (para ii). Among them are implements made of *thog* [*lcags*] and *gnam-lcags* (celestial iron), which as we have seen, are highly prized by the *lha-pa* for use in their ceremonies.[9] These metallic alloys are also used by other powerful Bon deities. For example, the great protectress Srid-pa'i rgyal-mo has a sword fashioned from *gnam-lcags*, which she uses to cut the life-force of enemies. The Bon tutelary deity Me-ri has a helmet, armor, sword, and ax made of *gnam-lcags*. In an essay written by the renowned scholar Namkhai Norbu, he has this to say about the subject (1996: 108–110):[10]

> *Thog-lcags* and *gnam-lcags* were made in ancient times and are found in many forms. They include instruments of the *rten* (tabernacles) for the divine protectors and *wer-ma* (class of martial spirit). They also include ancient utensils for eating and drinking; ornaments for males and females; articles for funerals, eliminating demons and treating disease; instruments needed for computations, divination and therapy; as well as objects for hunting and fighting. Presently, only small amounts and fragments remain of what the ancients used, and we do not often recognize their functions. Now seen as wonderful things, most Tibetans believe that they came from *thog* (molten metal thunderbolts) falling

[9] For lore and photographs of these artifacts see Bellezza 1998.
[10] This is a translation of selected passages on *thog-lcags* and *gnam-lcags*, as are the following two paragraphs.

from the sky. *gNam-lcags* are thought to have come from space and to be the instruments of the *lha*, *gnyan* and subterranean *klu*. It is not impossible that humans could actually obtain the instruments of the demigods. The Tibetan ancestors came from the *gnyan* and *ma-sangs* who then expanded their range. As related in many stories, the *ma-sangs* are part of the *the'u-rang*, who were more skillful at manufacture than humans.

A study of *thog-lcags* is also found in the materia medica of dGa' ba'i rdo-rje (1995: 45) where we read:

In Tibetan myth, *thog-lcags* are solidified forms derived from molten metal thunderbolts that hit the earth. Although they were [often] buried underground for a very long time they do not tarnish or disintegrate. They come in four colors: white, yellow, red and black. They are made of copper alloys and contain zinc, selenium, gold, silver and iron. They appear in many forms. According to archaeological research, they are ancient ornaments and utilitarian objects buried underground. *Thog-lcags* are beneficial for paralysis, epilepsy, madness and dumbness.

The same work also treats *gnam-lcags* (dGa' ba'i rdo-rje 1995: 45):

gNam-lcags were offered to ancient masters, the conquerors of the *dregs-pa* ('haughty ones', minor classes of spirits), by the *sde-brgyad* (literally, 'eight orders'; a common Buddhist classification of Indian and indigenous spirits). Some of them were hidden as treasure. By its very nature, the main constituent of *gnam-lcags* is primordial (celestial) iron. *gNam-lcags* objects were the instruments of the gods and diverse other things in ancient times. If struck by wood or horn they emit a [ringing] sound. *gNam-lcags* has an oily luster and cannot be cut with ordinary iron. This sacred substance can subdue demonic influences and other types of harm, and is beneficial in cases of madness.

Invocations of the Six Very Wrathful Black Dagger Treasure Guards records that Thang-lha's wife is an emanation of the ancient sky-dwelling deity gNam-phyi gung-rgyal, and that their son is in the form of a fierce yak (para iv). The yak is an animal species that the spirit-medium's helping spirits commonly appear in. For instance, the divine white yak frequently participates in fortune-bestowing rituals. In the text, the yak son is attributed with subduing the *btsan*, which are implicated by the *lha-pa* in disease-causing activities. In the final part of the text, Thang-lha is vibrantly portrayed as a destroyer of enemies and noxious agents (paras v, vi). In this ritual, mustard seeds empowered with mantras are used against the enemy, just as they are by the spirit-mediums. The text concludes with an admonition by the authors to only invoke the deities in matters of importance (para vi). The *lha-pa* also warn prospective clients against calling down the gods for whimsical or selfish purposes:

(i) *bSwo*! In the country endowed with the name and appellation Lha-rabs gnyan-po srid-pa'i yul (Mighty Lha Lineage Country Of Existence), in the heavens, in the castle of the clouds, there was the grandfather g.Yung-drung yid kyi bdag (Swastika Master of the Mind), the grandmother Klu-rabs skos kyi bdag (Mistress of the Appointed Klu Lineage), the father Lha-rabs srid-pa'i rje (Lha Lineage Lord of Existence), and the honorable mother sMan-ye grags rgyal-mo (Famous Primordial sMan Queen). From the melding of the minds of these [latter] two Thang-lha (Plains God), son of the *gnyan*, of the *lha* lineage [was produced]. His person manifested as a conch white *khyung*. The lamp of wisdom shines in his mind.

(ii) What hand-tools did his paternal ancestor (grandfather), the mighty one of the *lha* lineage, give him? The upper part of a turquoise dragon head, the lower part of a *thog* haughty [animal] head, a golden[11] blue sheep horn *tso*,[12] a white copper staff, a blue *gnam-lcags* clothes fastener,[13] and a wrathful tarnished copper vessel shaped like a human torso.[14] These were hand tools given as ornaments of his body. The right *khyung*'s horn of gNyan-sras thang-lha yar-bzhur (Son of the gNyan Snub-Nose God of the Plain) is surrounded by an army of one thousand *lha* with a blinding glare *khams se kham*.[15] His left horn is surrounded by an army of one thousand *gsas*[16] radiating light *tshig ge tshig*.[17]

[11] The Zhang-zhung word for gold (*mar*) is used in conjunction with the Tibetan equivalent (*gser*). Other Zhang-zhung language equivalents for precious substances customarily found in Bon texts include *ting-zhi* for *dngul* (silver), *zom-shang/shangs* for *lcags* (iron), *le-phrom* for *bse* (probably highest quality copper, which is said to be white in color), and *ga-ljang* for *g.yu* (turquoise).

[12] *Tso/tswo/dzo/dzwo* are magic bombs ritually empowered by mantras. According to Bon tradition, their use originated in pre-Imperial times. Blue sheep horns are thought to have been used for magical purposes by Zhang-zhung masters such as sNang-bzher lod-po and sTong-rgyung mthu-chen.

[13] *sDig-ru* (literally: scorpion horn). Perhaps it was originally in the shape of a scorpion? In the contemporary context, in western mNga' ris, the *sdig-rwa* is a clasp used to close the top of a woman's tunic (*ras-gos*). In gTsang, the *sdig-rwa* is the clasp for the woolen cloth that wraps around a woman's waist. The *sdig-rwa* is often made of silver and is decorated with animals, floral patterns, sacred symbols, and other designs.

[14] *dBal-zangs sngon-po'i khog-rtse drug*. Perhaps some kind of vessel used in ancient ritual performances.

[15] *Khams se kham* conveys that the glare is spreading out in all directions.

[16] *Sad* (Tibetanized to *gsas*) is believed to be the Zhang-zhung language equivalent of *lha*.

[17] *Tshig ge tshig* conveys the radiating of high intensity light.

(iii) Thang-lha came from the heavens to the earth. He searched for a country and place, and found 'Dam-shod smar-mo.[18] The sKu-lha[19] dwelt here. He dwelt on the peak of a white snow mountain. [In this land] grew various kinds of flowers. The magic of the *khyung* was unbound and Thang-lha of the *lha* lineage [appeared] as an iron [colored][20] holy man with scintillating spots. He casts *gnam-lcags* bombs [like] an arrow.[21] He draws from behind conch [white] sleet. During the three summer months, he stays on sPos-tsha spo-phrom.[22] During the three winter months, he resides at the headland of gNam mtsho phyug-mo.[23]

(iv) Thang-lha, son of the *gnyan*, searched for a wife and mate. The mistress gNam-phyi gung-rgyal (Celestial Grandmother Queen of the Heaven) is a *dbal* (powerful and dignified) iron [colored] woman with a golden *thor-tsug* (crown) and eyebrows of turquoise.[24] She rides a conch white hind mount. [Thus] he found his wife and mate. These two coupled, [producing] a crystal-colored male yak who has horns of gold on his head. From his right and left eye copious sparks spread forth. With his right nostril he inhales 900 *gri-bo* (male murderers).

[18] Also called 'Dam-shod snar-mo. This more or less geographically corresponds with present day 'Dam-gzhung county.

[19] *sKu-lha*/*sku-bla* are deities that serve as bodyguards, particularly in ancient times for the sPu-rgyal kings of Tibet. A precedent for Thang-lha being called *sku-bla*, is found in a Tun-huang manuscript; the word is used to designate members of a group of nine mountain deities (Lha-dgu) circumscribing the sPu-rgyal kingdom, which had a genealogical relationship with the kings (Karmay 1996: 66). The indigenous cosmogony found in the *mKhas pa lde'us mdzad pa'i rgya bod kyi chos 'byung rgyas pa*, by mKhas-pa lde'u (late 13th century)*, *Gangs can rig mdzod*, vol. 3 (ed. Chab-spel tshe-brtan phun-tshogs), pp. 229, 230, records that 'O-de gung-rgyal (mountain god of Nyang) fathered more sons than falling rain. Among them were the Lha-dgu of which Thang-la (= lha) yar-bzhur was a member. To produce Thang-lha, 'O-de gung-rgyal mated with Srin 'bza sbyar-lcam ma in the country of the *srin*. Hazod (2000b: 213) identifies three main features of the *sku-bla* Yar-lha sham-po: the territorial soul, the ancestral *gnyan* that functions as the mythical progenitor of prominent members of the local population, and the divine body of the king.
* For further bibliographic data see Martin 1997, pp. 43, 44.

[20] Iron usually denotes a dark bluish color in deities with a more wrathful nature.

[21] Means that the bombs fly straight and quick like an arrow.

[22] The sacred mountain generally known as sPo-che, located northwest of gNam-mtsho in gNam-ru (dPal-mgon county).

[23] Probably the large headland now known as bKra-shis do, located on the southeast side of gNam mtsho, is intended here.

[24] Although not explicitly stated, this actually refers to an emanation of gNam-phyi gung-rgyal, the goddess gNam mtsho, who is the well-known wife of Thang-lha. This is indicated by the fact that gNam-phyi gung-rgyal is a Bon deity beyond the worldly sphere. In her primary form, gNam-phyi gung-rgyal is not geographically localized, nor is she ireful in nature. gNam-phyi gung-rgyal is mentioned in the Tun-huang manuscripts, in the role of a celestial grandmother. See Thomas 1957, part 3, p. 31, verses 69–79.

With his left nostril he inhales 900 *gri-mo* (female murderers). By the roaring sound of his mouth he conquers the *lha* and *'dre*. Through his activities he was destined to destroy the *btsan* men mounted on horses. He subdues the territorial *btsan* of the red locale.

(v) Thang-lha, son of the *gnyan*, is very powerful. Conquer and destroy the enemies who hate us (*sdang ba'i dgra*), and the harming obstructers (*gnod pa'i bgegs*). I, the *gshen*[25] person, have never misrepresented the holy pronouncements.[26] Mighty and powerful guardian of treasure cast asunder the mind and body of the treacherous enemies who despise me. Yank out the red and black life-force channels of those who slander my name and call you impotent.[27]

(vi) Thus with these spells white mustard seeds are hexed, and effigies of the enemies and obstructers struck with them. Establish your faultlessness through witnesses.[28] Convey *gtor-ma*[29] [to the deities]. The mighty Treasure Guards[30] will assist you if you have not broken the religious vows. If [this text] is disseminated to those without religious vows it misrepresents the holy pronouncements and misleads, and [the deities] shall sever your life-force. Therefore, do not inconsequentially invoke the Treasure Guardians. Invoke them when propitiating,[31] and when suffering from nightmares. This is the method of performance regarding the mighty Treasure Guardians.

Transliteration of the ∂Bal phur nag po'i gter srung drug gi bskul pa *excerpt*

(i) bswo yul la ming dang mtshan gsol ba / lha rabs gnyan po srid pa'i yul / mkhar ni bar snang sprin gyi mkhar / myes ni g.yung drung yid kyi bdag / phyis mo klu rabs skos kyi bdag / yab ni lha rabs srid pa'i rje / yum sman ye grags rgyal mo lags / de gnyis

[25] Designates Bon priests, practitioners and adepts since early times.

[26] *bKa'*. This denotes the Bon canon, the utterances of the founder of the religion, gShen-rab mi-bo-che. This statement is asserted by the ritualists in order to show that they are not amiss calling the protectors to do their bidding.

[27] This line is followed by several lines of secret wrathful formulae, to be directed against enemies in legitimate cases of self-defense.

[28] The witnesses are the various Bon deities. These are invoked by the ritualist to establish that the use of the ritual is for legitimate purposes.

[29] *gTor-ma* are pyramidal and conical structures, often made of barley meal and mixed with a variety of other ingredients. They are formed and decorated in many ways, according to the deity and function for which they are intended. They serve as offerings, instruments to placate noxious forces and to temporarily contain aspects of deities (cf. Norbu 1995: 243). For a description of various types of *gtor-ma* see Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 347–354.

[30] The six deities of the text.

[31] Refers to the various Bon tutelary deities.

thugs yid 'dres pa la / lha rabs thang lha gnyan gi bu / sku ni dung khyung dkar po sprul / ye shes sgron me thugs la gsal/

(ii) yab myes lha rabs gnyan po yis / phyag gi cha ru ci phul na / g.yu 'brug sngon mo'i ya mkhal (= mgal) dang / dregs pa thog gi ma mkhal (= mgal) dang / tso mar gser gyi rna ru dang / lo phrul (= le phrom) bse yi ldan dkar dang / gnam lcags sngon mo'i sdig ru dang / dbal zangs sngon po'i khog rtse drug / phyag cha sku yi rgyan du phul / gnyan sras thang lha yar bzhur te / khyung ru g.yas pa lha dmag stong gis bskor / dbal 'phro khams se kham / khyung ru g.yon pa gsas dmag stong gis bskor 'od 'phro tshig ge tshig /

(iii) thang lha gnam nas sa la byon / yul dang sa btsal ba / 'dam shod smar mo btsal / sku la (= lha/bla) der chags pas / chags so gangs dkar rtse / me tog sna tshogs 'khrungs / khyung gi rdzu 'phrul bshig / lha rabs thang lha de / lcags kyi mi pho zhig / dbal gyi drang 'brum can / gnam lcags thog gi mda' yang 'phen / dung gi khu 'phang rol du khrid / dbyar gsum spos tsha spo phrom sgang na bzhugs / dgun gsum gnam mtsho phyug mo'i do la bzhugs /

(iv) thang lha gnyan sras kyis / khab dang dbyal btsal ba / gnam phyi gung rgyal dpon mo ba / dbal lcags mi mo la / gser gyi thor tsug can / g.yu yi smin ma can / dung sha dkar mo chibs su bcibs / khab dang dbyal du btsal / de gnyis bshos pa la / shel gyi g.yag po la / rtse mo gser gyi ru / spyan mig g.yas g.yon nas / dbal gyi tshwa tshwa 'phro / tshul (= mtshul) khung g.yas pas gri bo dgu brgya rngub / mtshul khung g.yon pas gri mo dgu brgya rngub / zhal gyis ngar skad kyis / lha 'dre dbang du bsdus / 'phrin las skal phog pa / btsan gyi mi rta lhu dang rdul du rlog / yul btsan kha dmar 'dul /

(v) thang lha gnyan sras mthu bo che / sdang ba'i dgra dang gnod pa'i bgegs / dbang du sdus la rdul du rlog / mi gshen bdag gis bka' la ra chod ma byas so / gter bdag gnyen (= gnyan) po mthu' bo che / bdag dang 'gras pa'i dgra bo 'di / lus dang sems su phrol la shog / bdag la ltas ngan zer ba 'di / khyod la mthu chung zer ba 'di / srog rtsa dmar nag drongs la shog / *** /
/ *** / Six lines of spells.

(vi) zhes pa'i sngags de rnams nyung dkar la sngags la dgra bgegs kyi ling ka la brdeg go / ma nyes pa'i dpang gzug go gtor ma btang (= gtong) ngo / gter bdag gnyen (= gnyan) po 'di rnams ni / dam tshigs ma nyams na sdong grogs byed do / bka' la ra chod gzu lum byed nas / dam med rnams la spel na rang gi srog gcod do / de'i phyir gter bdag rnams gang rung la mi bskul lo / sgrub pa byed dus dang rmi lam 'khrug pa'i dus su bskul lo / gter bdag gnyen (= gnyan) po'i sgrub thabs /

The second text we will examine for the mountain god gNyan-chen thang-lha is entitled *'Dzam gling spyi bsang* (*Universal World Purification*), an ancient offering hymn preserved by the *sngags-pa* of the region. It is attributed to the Eighth century Vajrayana master Slob-dpon padma sambha (Gu-ru rin-po-che) but this authorship is certainly apocryphal.[32] It would appear that attribution to such a seminal figure was used as a stratagem, sanctioning the contents of the text by bringing it within the grasp of Buddhism. This writing belongs to the elementary *gsol-kha* (invocatory) genre and is designed to be used in conjunction with offerings of incense to Thang-lha and his extensive entourage. Incense is the instrument that purifies the deities and the environment in which they and all living beings reside. It is popularly believed that purification through fumigation restores the integrity and contentment of the deities, leading to a strengthening of the concord with human beings.

'Dzam-gling spyi-bsang exclusively contains indigenous lore and makes no mention of Buddhist tenets or deities. Most significantly, it does not include a passage relating to the administration by Gu-ru rin-po-che of a Buddhist oath to Thang-lha.[33] The absence of Buddhist tradition and the archaic character of the pantheon in the text indicate that it was derived from the bardic tradition (*sgrung-lugs/sgrung-rgyud*) of the gNam-mtsho region. At some point in time, this oral

[32] This manuscript of four folios, written in *dbu-can* script, was obtained at gNam-mtsho by Bya-do rin-po-che, bsTan 'dzin 'byung-gnas, in the mid 1980s. By virtue of four additional lines composed by Bya-do rin-po-che and appended to the end of the original text it effectively became incorporated into the dGe-lugs-pa sect literary tradition. For references to this text see Bellezza 1997, pp. 42–44, 60, 61. An older, but less well edited copy of this manuscript in my possession is entitled *Thang lha'i gsol mchod*. It provides no such authorship by Gu-ru rin-po-che.

[33] For references to the Buddhist oath Thang-lha was forced to accept see Bellezza 1997, pp. 25–29.

tradition of naming and praising Thang-lha and the other deities of the locale was written down in its present form. Fortunately, no attempt was made to graft Buddhist religious concepts or deities onto the text, permitting its original character to remain intact. *'Dzam gling spyi bsangs*, in its entirety, therefore, can be attributed to Tibetan indigenous tradition. Among its contents are colorful references to Thang-lha's son and circle of animals, instrumental figures in the spirit-medium traditions of Upper Tibet.

The ancient bardic prosody,[34] as featured in the *'Dzam gling spyi bsangs*, is characterized by the ample usage of assonant trisyllabic indicators of sound (onomatopoeias), movement and form, as well as lines composed of a regular number of syllables (*tshigs-bcad*). Rhythm is dramatically dictated by the placement of the highly descriptive trisyllabic indicators at the end of verses. Examples include *khrol lo lo* (a clanking sound), *me re re* (overflowing water) and *thibs se thibs* (all-sparkling or a swirling motion). In Tibetan prosody words used primarily for their sound value are called *sgra-rgyan* ('sound ornament').[35]

[34] The origin of the bardic tradition is related in the late 12th century Buddhist religious history *Chos 'byung me tog snying po sbrang rtsi'i bcud*, by Nyang-ral nyi-ma 'od-zer (1124–1192?) (for further bibliographic information see Martin 1997, pp. 30, 31). It states (p. 160): "The first king of Tibet was the lord gNya' khri btsan-po. During his reign began the oral tradition, the bardic tradition, poetry, *bka' kugs* (?), dance, song, the *shon* performance*, and popular entertainment, etc." (*bod kyi rgyal po la snga ba rje gnya' khri btsan po yin te / de'i sku ring la / gtam rgyud dang / sgrung rgyud dang / sdeb sbyor dang / bka' kugs dang / bro gar dang / glu gzhas dang / shon rtsed dang / rtsed 'jo la sogs pa byung ba yin no /*).

* A song and dance tradition, which according to the Bon-po, began in Zhang-zhung. The *shon* still survives in far western Tibet and Khu-nu.

[35] dGon-chung rab-brtan (2003) provides a passage from a Tun-huang manuscript (unfortunately, he provides no bibliographic data or narrative context), which includes four lines with trisyllabic indicators: 1) *dgung skar ni si li li* / "Ah, in the middle of the sky the stars *si li li* (conveys that the stars are twinkling)"; 2) *brag dkar ni si li li* / "Ah, the white rock *si li li* (conveys that the formation is sparkling)"; 3) *'bras drug ni si li li* / "Ah, the grain crop *si li li* (conveys the rippling of the grain crop in the wind)"; and 4) *skyi bser ni spu ru ru* / "Ah, the breeze *spu ru ru* (conveys the buffeting of the breeze)". dGon-chung rab-brtan argues that this ancient system of prosody (*tshig-rgyan*) probably belongs to a tradition known as *bskor-ba'i rgyan* (the ornamentation or poetry of repeating words), which consists of the repetition or circling of a single word to describe an image or action. *In Pelliot 1134 (Choix de Documents Tibétains Conservés à la Bibliothèque Nationale Complété par Quelques Manuscrits de L' India Office et du British Museum*, vol. II), lns. 89, 90, we find the same types of verses: *gnag thibs se thibs* (conveys something black (?) falling and aggregating like snow); *bye'u phu ru ru* (depicts the fluttering wings of a small bird); and *rgya bya gang* (= *gong*?) *ka tsig tsig pu ru ru* (depicts the trilling or tremulous quality of the birdsong of the grouse (?)).

The first five paragraphs of *'Dzam gling spyi bsangs* contains seven syllables in each line, the next five paragraphs five syllables in each line, and the last paragraph resumes the seven-syllable line structure. The use of dactylic lines of five or six syllables is common in the Tun-huang manuscripts, the archaic literature of Tibet; while Indian-inspired versification, as adopted in Tibet at the beginning of the 11th century, is marked by trochaic lines of seven, nine and more syllables (Stein 1972: 259–276).[36] Nevertheless, rather than representing a transition between the old and new metrical types, non-trochaic lines of seven syllables may also have been known in the ancient oral tradition, as suggested by integral stanzas of *'Dzam gling spyi bsangs*. Lines based on set numbers of syllables invest a text with a highly lyrical quality that lends itself to singing and chanting, as well as being a mnemonic tool to facilitate oral transmission over the generations. In order to maintain the standard number of syllables, extra words and particles that invest no additional semantic weight, are often interpolated in the verses. A good example is found in paragraph ix of *'Dzam gling spyi bsangs*, where the affix *ba* is added to the *bdag-sgra* (signifying agent) *po* in, *blon-po-ba* (minister) and the affix *pa* to *dmag-dpon* (general) to make up the required amount of syllables.

'Dzam gling spyi bsangs begins with a colorful account of Thang-lha's celestial castle and the wild animals that guard it (paras i, ii). This great palace is described as possessing many precious substances such as gold and turquoise, and it is guarded over by wild animals like tigers and bear. Jewels and precious metals often figure in liturgical descriptions about the indigenous pantheon, and constitute offerings presented to them. Likewise, fierce carnivores frequently find mention as members of the circle of mountain deities, and in the liturgies are ritually offered to the deities. Such motifs convey the power, majesty and exclusivity of the indigenous pantheon as well as their possessions and activities. In a related tradition, precious substances and large carnivores were used as symbols of rank and achievement in the Imperial period, according to historical lore. For example, in a late 13th century work entitled *Garland of Ancient Accounts*, by Ne'u paṇḍi-ta, it records the use of such power symbols in the reign of King Ral-pa-chen (815–841):[37]

[36] The meter in Sanskrit poetry is dependent upon the sequence of long and short syllables. The Indian tradition was gradually adopted by Tibetans as they gained competency in Sanskrit. See Smith 2001, p. 201. Nevertheless, Sanskrit

> The superior Lord was very adept, therefore his dominion was higher than the sky. As he could keep his subjects firmly under his rule there were few criminals. His country flourished. The people were contented. His castle was a divine country. The Lord and his chiefs were the father and mother. The people were [like] brothers and sisters. He conferred the gold and turquoise *yig-tshangs* (insignia)[38] of wisdom. He did confer the tiger and lion *yig-tshangs* of heroes.

In the first portion of the *'Dzam gling spyi bsangs* text there is the liberal, but not always very adroit, usage of vibrantly descriptive trisyllabic indicators, an integral part of Tibetan indigenous poetry (paras i–iii). The text proceeds to describe Thang-lha and his riding steed (para iii), which are entreated to powerfully and swiftly aid the ritualists (para iv). Among his circle of *gnyan* are the *mi-dkar rta-dkar* (white men on white horses) (para iv), possessing deities for the two female spirit-mediums of this survey, dPa' mo and sGrol-dkar. To entice Thang-lha and his retinue to carry out the wishes of the ritualists, they are offered a variety of special livestock among other delectable offerings (para v). As we have seen, the spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet often instruct their clients to present choice animals to the indigenous pantheon in order to win their favor and assistance. The offering of livestock is a widespread custom, with numerous variations and applications in the region.[39]

The text goes on to mention the warriors flanking each side of Thang-lha (para vi). By their close proximity to Thang-lha these figures resemble the pre-Imperial and Imperial era royal priests known as *sku-gshen/rgyal-gshen*, who protected the lives of the kings and their subjects. For example, the *rgyal-gshen* dMu-khri btsan-po is attributed with using meteoric bombs to destroy the *bdud* demons (Bellezza

prosody (which hinges upon variant syllable values) could not be fully tailored to the Tibetan linguistic structure.

[37] *sNgon gyi gtam me thog phreng ba*, by Ne'u paṇḍi-ta grags-pa smon-lam blo-gros (*Bod kyi lo rgyus deb ther khag lnga*, edited by Chab-spel tshe-brtan phun-tshogs), p. 8. This text was authored in the Water Sheep Year, most probably corresponding to 1283 (p. 2). For further bibliographic information see Martin 1997, p. 46.

[38] According to a lexical entry, *yig-tshangs* were awards given by the Tibetan kings for commendable activities. Gold and turquoise *yig-tshangs* were given to the highest caliber of ministers, silver and *phra-men* (a semi-precious stone) ones to middling ministers, and copper and iron varieties to the lowest ministers. See *Bod rgya tshig mdzod chen mo*, p. 2569.

[39] See Part Five, section viii, pp. 466–471. For a discussion of the relationship between the indigenous custom of offering livestock to the deities and its assimilation into the Buddhist tradition of freeing animals out of compassion (*tshe-thar*) see Holler 2002.

2001: 56). Next, the text specifies Thang-lha's close relatives, including his father, two wives, younger brother, son and maternal uncle (paras vii, viii).) Thang-lha is referred to as a *sku-lha* (personal/body deity) (para viii), an epithet for important *lha-ri* (mountain gods). As noted this term for mountain deities can be traced to the Tun-huang manuscripts, and is related to their protection of the kings. This is followed by an enumeration of Thang-lha's ministers, generals, sister and herders (paras ix, x). Thang-lha's family members and subjects are endowed with names derived from native tradition, which reflects the existence of an ancient sacred geographical network of deities extending across much of the eastern Byang-thang.

Three of Thang-lha's mountain generals (*dmag-dpon*) of the four cardinal directions hold different colored *ru-dar* (triangular ensigns or regimental banners) aloft. In keeping with this scheme, we can infer that the fourth *btsan* general of the west Khong-khyim zhal-dkar carries a red *ru-dar*. These war banners are a symbol of leadership that are used to signal the mountain gods' circle of spirit-helpers. Also known as *ru-mtshon* and *dbal-dar*, they are the customary attribute of many indigenous deities. According to Tibetan historical lore, the generals of the Imperial period (629–846) army used the same type of military flag. Another hallmark of the majestic power of the chief native divinities is the use of specially marked and colored horses. Likewise, as symbols of their lofty status, Imperial period generals are also thought to have ridden horses with particular colors and patterns. I subscribe to the hypothesis that this interrelated martial tradition of flags and special horses for the indigenous pantheon and Imperial period commanders is a relic of pre-Imperial culture. It would appear to me that such a daedal and far-reaching custom and tradition had long historical antecedents. The 13th century history *mKhas pa lde'u* (pp. 259–261), gives a description of the horses and banners of the commanders (variously called *stong-dpon, dmag-dpon* and *ru-dpon*) of the Ru-chen sde-bzhi, the Four Wings of Tibet,[40] which have definite parallels in the ritual texts for the indigenous deities. The eight commanders are presented as residents of the four cardinal directions and four intermediate points, a mode of spatial presentation common to ritual literature as well.

[40] They are: g.Yas-ru (centered in Shangs rnam-gling), dBu (dBus) ru (centered in Lhasa), g.Yo (g.Yon) ru (centered in Yar-lung), and Ru-lag (centered in sBrad kyi ngur-pa sna). See *mKhas pa lde'u*, p. 272.

The *mKhas pa lde'u* tells us that King Srong-btsan sgam-po (605?–650) had 61 *stong-sde* (divisions of one thousand) in total, each with its own general. Among them were:

1) 'Bro rgyal-mtshan seng-ge, commander of Upper Ru-lag, rode an orange horse with a red mane. His ensign had a standing white lion.
2) Khyung-po mes-po, commander of Lower Ru-lag, had a turquoise head ornament (*g.yu yi zur-phud can*),[41] and rode a tawny cavalry horse (*ru-rta*) with a black mane. He had a *dpal* (= *dbal*) *dar* ensign.
3) Khyung-po stag-bzang nya-stong, commander of Upper g.Yas-ru, rode a sparking red horse (*mtshal-lu me-stag*). He held aloft a black ensign with a white center on which a *khyung* was drawn.
4) mGos khri-snyen gsang-mchod, commander of Lower g.Yas-ru, rode a turquoise horse. He had a yellow ensign with striped borders (*ru-dar ni skyer kha-gong-khra*).
5) sNa nam-rgyal rta-rgan mo-chung, commander of Upper dBu (dBus) ru, rode a beige cavalry horse with a white mane. He had a red ensign with striped streamers (*dmar-po lce-khra*).
6) dBas skye-bzang stag-snang, commander of Lower dBu (dBus) ru, rode a red horse with leopard spot markings (*mtshal-lu gzig-ris*). He had a *dpal* (= dbal) *dar* ensign.
7) Myag stag-gzig g.yu-btsan, commander of Upper g.Yo (g.Yon) ru, rode a sorrel cavalry horse. He had a red lion ensign.
8) 'Chims rgyal-gzigs shud-ting, commander of Lower g.Yo (g.Yon) ru, rode a red cavalry horse. He had a white ensign with a black center (*ru-dar-dkar snying-nag*).

'Dzam gling spyi bsangs concludes with requests for social prestige, wealth, good food, fine clothing, and plentiful offspring (para xi). The explicit language used in these requests delineates Thang-lha's function as a fortune-bestowing, disease-repelling deity, who is accessible to his votaries. As we have seen, these functions of the deity find clear expression in the spirit-mediumship of Upper Tibet:

(i) Universal world purification. *Kyai*![42] On the peak of the divine white snow mountain is the personal castle of the Lord (Thang-lha) *ldems se ldems*.[43] The four foundations are made from black iron. The four sides are made from bright conch. The four corners are made from precious gold. The cornices are made from turquoise. The roof rafters are made from lapis lazuli. Its pillars and beams are made of crystal and coral. Its doors are of multicolored gold *thibs se thibs*.[44] The eaves are red and white. Spears and arrows [are on the roof]. There are flags and banners *spu ru ru*.[45] On the flanks are mists *thal ma thul*.[46] On the foundations there is limpid water *me re re*.[47]

(ii) At the east portal of such a castle is a great herd of divine white yaks. At the south portal of such a castle there are straw-colored divine horses *springs se springs*.[48] At the west portal of such a castle there are tigers, leopards, black bears, and brown bears *khro lo lo*.[49] At the north portal of such a castle birds soar overhead *lings se lings*.[50]

(iii) Inside such a castle reposes the mighty and fierce Thang-lha. You are a noble conch [white] man with marvelous turquoise eyebrows. In your right hand you hold a cane horsewhip with three joints. With your left hand you say a crystal rosary. You bind a sash of lapis lazuli and gold. You ride a straw-colored horse with a turquoise mane. It has a golden bridle and a turquoise halter *sbrings se sbrings*,[51] a silk saddle rug and a conch saddle *wangs se wangs*,[52] and stirrup rings *khrol lo lo*.[53] Its tail and mane [are like] mists *'thibs se 'thibs*.[54] Do not tarry, come swiftly to this place!

(iv) *Kyai*! Go! Move from space! Signaling, we call you fierce son of the *gnyan*. Your straw-colored [horse] runs very swiftly. Your cane

[41] A characteristic head ornament of the goddess gNam-mtsho phyug-mo.
[42] *Kyai* (*Ka* + *ya-btags* + *'greng-bu* + *'greng-bu*)/*Kyai'* (*Ka* + *ya-btags* + *'greng-bu* + *'greng-bu* + *bu* + subscribed *a-chung*)/*kye* is an honorific word frequently used in ritual texts to call deities. It occupies an extrasyllabic position in the metrical scheme. *Kyai* and *kyai'* have a more exclamatory flavor. Derived from an old grammatical usage, *kyai* and *kyai'* can also denote that the deity is called twice. Tibetans report that in ancient times, these were polite forms of address used to call persons of high status. The familiar form of the word is *ka-ye*, which is commonly used in Khams, although in central Tibet it is considered an impolite way to address someone.
[43] *lDems se ldems* seems to indicate that the castle is shimmering, thus giving the impression that it is swaying.
[44] *Thibs se thibs* expresses that the doors are sparkling everywhere.
[45] *Spu ru ru* conveys that the flags and banners are fluttering.
[46] *Thal ma thul* shows that the mists are rising and billowing.
[47] *Me re re* indicates that the water is overflowing.
[48] *sPrings se springs* conveys that the horses are running about.
[49] *Khro lo lo* in this context conveys that the animals are fiercely roving around.
[50] *Lings se lings* seems to portray that the wings of the birds are moving up and down.
[51] *sBrings se sbrings* would appear to show that the horse's lead is waving.
[52] *Wangs se wangs* seems to convey that the saddle is rocking.
[53] *Khrol lo lo* is the clanking sound that the stirrups make.
[54] *'Thibs se 'thibs*. Spelling as in the text. This indicates that the tail and mane are making a swirling motion.

horsewhip with three joints is fear-inspiring. A circle of a one hundred thousand strong army of *gnyan* surrounds you. Every one of them is a white man with a white horse. They hold white banners straight overhead. We entreat and offer according to the injunction.[55] When entreated do not be just a little grateful.[56] When deputed do not be of feeble power. When sent do not race with a diminished capacity. Do not tarry, come swiftly to this place.

(v) *Kyai*! The offerings we give you are bright white divine yaks,[57] light orange divine horses with turquoise manes, bright white divine sheep, young female divine goats with good horns, libations, dairy foods, sweets, *gtor-ma*, and melodious sounding white cane flutes. We give offerings such as these.

(vi) *Kyai*! On the right [side of Thang-lha] are the six Za-ram skyes-bu,[58] archers with tiger [skin] quivers and leopard [skin] bow cases. We give you ornamented incense offerings.[59] Carry out the activities entrusted to you. On the left is the manifested sBid-lha, the spear holder.[60] We give you ornamented incense offerings. Carry out the activities entrusted to you. In the front is the searcher of tracks, Yab-btsan zhal-dkar (Father bTsan White Face), holding the red lasso of the *btsan*.[61] We give you ornamented incense offerings. Carry out the

[55] This injunction (*bka'*) probably refers to the method of worship ordained by the ritualist's root lama, or to instructions contained in a certain liturgical manual. Less likely, it alludes to the orders of the deity himself.

[56] In other words, Thang-lha should show ample pleasure at his offerings.

[57] Divine White Yak (*Lha g.yag dkar-po*) can refer to a popular zoomorphic deity in Thang-lha's retinue; however, in this passage, the yaks and the other divine animals mentioned represent perfectly formed and colored animals or their facsimiles, which are fit to offer as gifts to Thang-lha.

[58] This name appears to denote that these deities are youthful in appearance. In the sTag-lung gNyan-chen thang-lha *gsol-kha* (see next text in book) they are described as follows: "They are iron men with iron horses. They have helmets of iron. They are the protectors of youth (*skyes-bu dar gyi mgon*). They are the guardians of children (*na-chung gzhon gyi dpal*)."

[59] Along with incense, probably other objects such as jewels are intended here.

[60] sBid-lha is a prominent peak in the mountain range situated on the southeast side of 'Dam-gzhung valley. A manuscript of four folios entitled *Invocations and Offerings of the Melodious Sharp Sound of the Drum of the Great Commander Powerful sBid-lha* (*Ru 'dren chen po sbid lha dpung pa'i gsol mchod snyan pa'i rnga gsang zhes*), written by the dGe-lugs-pa monk bsTan-skyong exists for this deity. However, it does not contain a descriptive account of sBid-lha. In the sTag-*lung gsol-kha* sBid-lha (sBrid-lha dpung-pa) is described as such, "He has a purplish brown [complexion] and a white horse. He holds a brown copper spear."

[61] sTag-lung *gsol-kha*: g.Ya' btsan zhal-dkar (Slates bTsan White Face). He is described as having *gro-ser* (yellow wheat) and *ljang-bu* (grain sprouts), and riding a purplish (*mtshal-smug*) horse with a white face and white hoofs and lower legs.

activities entrusted to you. In the back is the rear guard Ni-ra g.ya' dmar who holds the red gold spear.[62]

(vii) We proclaim that the father of Thang-lha is 'Od-de gung-rgyal.[63] [Thang-lha's] first wife is Lha-mo mtsho-dar sman (Divine Female Frozen Lake Sman)[64] with a conch [white] pleated [dress]. Your last wife is gNam-mtsho phyug-mo mounted on a blue aquatic horse.[65]

(viii) The younger brother of sKu-lha is Thang-sprin nor-dkar g.yang (Plains Cloud White Wealth Good Fortune), who wears white silk clothes.[66] The son of sKu-lha is Thang-lha'i 'phyor-bo (Handsome God of the Plain)[67] with a white crystal egg. The maternal uncle of sKu-lha is the respected 'Brong-rnyan ser-po (Yellow Wild Yak Argali),[68] who is mounted on a young tigress.

(ix) [Thang-lha's] foreign minister is rMa-chen spom-ra with a white [horse] with a red mane.[69] Your interior minister 'Gul-ring 'phag-rtag,[70] is mounted on a blue horse with a turquoise mane. Your eastern general bSam-gtan gangs-bzang is with an upright white regimental banner.[71] Your southern general Dam-can mgar-nag is with an upright black

[62] sTag-lung *gsol-kha*: Ne'u-ra g.ya' dmar. After Ni-ra g.ya' dmar and all other deities listed through para x, the refrain is repeated: "We give you ornamented incense offerings. Carry out the activities entrusted to you." (*brgyan pa'i bsangs mchod 'bul / bcol ba'i 'phrin las mdzod*).

[63] For the role of this deity in a Bon cosmogony see, Part Four, pp. 397–400.

[64] According to the sTag-lung *gsol-kha*, she has a white body and a turquoise whip. An account of this goddess is found in Bellezza 1997, pp. 55, 232.

[65] Sacred lakes in Upper Tibet such as gNam-mtsho are commonly believed to host magical aquatic livestock. See Bellezza 1997, pp. 101, 102, 334, 335.

[66] sTag-lung *gsol-kha*: Thang 'bring ngur-ba.

[67] Also known as Thang-lha mchor-po (Handsome God of the Plain), the residence of this deity is a pointed peak immediately northeast of the Thang-lha massif. He is the most popular of the possessing forms of Thang-lha for the spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet.

[68] sTag-lung *gsol-kha*: 'Brong-gnyan thang-po. He has a white horse with a turquoise mane. Reflecting archaic onomastic customs, the 14th king of Tibet, 'Brong zher-legs, and the 30th king, 'Brong-gnyan lde-ru, also have the word for wild yak in their names.

[69] The greatest *yul-lha* of A-mdo. The text *Ti pom thang gsum gyi mchod bskang* (*bsKang 'bum*, vol. 2, nos. 311–318), rediscovered at [Yar-lha] sham-po by rMa-lha rgod-thog, describes his appearance (nos. 314, ln. 5 to 317, ln. 2): He has a white body color. He wears a silver helmet and holds a precious jewel. He rides an orange horse with a turquoise mane. When he manifested as a *sems-pa* (*bodhisattva*) and met the Bon deity gShen-lha 'od-dkar, he rode a lion and held a *bum-pa* (vase). When he stayed with the saint Dran-pa nam-mkha' he rode a great *khyung* and held a jewel.

[70] sTag-lung *gsol-kha*: mGul-ring 'phrag-rtag (= ltag) (Long Neck Shoulders).

[71] This mountain is located east of gNam-mtsho. A description of the deity is found in the *Gang* (= *Gangs*) *bzang dang khri nag gi gsol mchod* written by O-rgyan

regimental banner. Your western general Khong-khyim zhal-dkar is mounted on the red horse of the *btsan*.[72] Your northern general sPo-che be-yang is with an upright yellow regimental banner.[73]

(x) The sister of sKu-lha is 'Bri-lam gangs-bzang with the *g.yu yi zur-phud* (turquoise head ornament).[74] Thang-lha's female yak-keeper is Lag-gsor phyug-mo.[75] Thang-lha's goat-herder is Khyo-ra btsan-po.[76] Thang-lha's dog-keeper is the respected g.Ya' dmar stag-btsan.

(xi) We request from you the capability of attainment.[77] We the ritualists, sponsors and benefactors request the capability of attaining a

gzhan-phen mtha' yas (preserved in a protector collection of the 'Bab-rom bka' brgyud entitled *dPal ldan 'bab rom pa'i btsun dgon sku gsum mkha' 'gro'i gling gi'i* (= *gi*) *gsol mchod ye shes lha srung dgyes pa'i sgra dbyangs*, folios 22a, ln. 4 to 24a, ln. 4. This collection tells us it was made by mGon-rdor, as requested by the old *sngags-pa* Padma tshe-bstan), folios 22b, ln. 2 to 23a, ln. 1: "You are the chief of all the heroes. You are called bSam-gtan gangs-bzang, the famous one. You have a bright white conch complexion like a shining snow mountain in the rising sun. You have a jeweled turban on your head. You are mounted on an orange horse with eyes of *gzi* (banded or engraved agate). In your right hand you hold a white horsewhip. In your left hand you grasp jeweled reins. In front of you is a tray of jewels. You have food, livestock and possessions *spungs se spung* (heaped like a mountain). Your right and left sides are full of silk clothes and jewels. Behind you are weapons and armor. You have a retinue of many servants." In another text of the same collection entitled *'Bab rom yul lha'i gsol mchod* by Grub-chen btsan-rgod (folio 26), it adds that bSam-gtan gangs-bzang has 31 *lha-btsan* in his retinue.

[72] Khong-khyim zhal-dkar is a mountain in the Thang-lha range southwest of the Thang-lha massif, in lower sGar-sde, in the vicinity of the old township headquarters. It is very well known to local residents. According to Lopon Tenzin Namdak, this mountain is the residence of the Bon protector deity Hur-pa. Hur-pa is originally thought to have been a Zhang-zhung deity. For a detailed account of this protector see supplement at end of gNyan-chen thang-lha section, pp. 214–216.

[73] This mountain is located northwest of gNam-mtsho, in sPo-che township. A sPo-che *gsol-kha* has been preserved as an oral text by the *spo-spo* (bard) Lhu-grub tshe-ring. From transcription, the section concerning the description of the deity reads: "In the center of the snowy white formation of sPo-che is the grandfather *sngags 'chang* (equivalent of *sngags-pa*) minister. You are the venerable one of all the *yul-lha*. You have a dark brown complexion and are attired in the costume of the *sngags-pa*. You ride a tan horse with wings of wind. You beat a drum with a booming sound and hold a *po-ti* (volume of scriptures). Support the Bon doctrine on behalf of virtuous people and activities." (*spo che brag dkar gangs dkyil na / A myes sngags 'chang bka' blon po / yul sa kun gyi mchod gnas yin / sku mdog smug nag sngags gos mnabs / chibs su gro dkar rlung gshog cibs / rnga rdung sgra sgrogs po ti 'dzin / bon bstan kha 'dzin dge don mdzod /*).

[74] Mountain just south of gNyan-chen thang-lha.

[75] sTag-lung *gsol-kha*: Lag-sor phyug-mo. This is the tall mountain commonly known as 'Bri-rdzi (Female Yak-Keeper), situated south of Yangs-pa-can, in the mountains east of the gNyan-chen thang-lha range.

[76] This might be the mountain commonly known as Ra-rdzi (Goat-keeper), located near La-sar-la (sp.?), the pass connecting the mTshur-phu valley and Yangs-pa-can.

[77] *dNgos-grub*. In texts devoted to the 'worldly' environment-bound deities, this

good reputation. We request the capability of attaining an increase in our wealth. We request the capability of obtaining livestock. We request the capability of attaining foods of good fortune.[78] We request the capability of attaining soft and supple clothes. The actions we request from you are: don't let our youth die violent or accidental deaths. Do not let us be distracted by the speech of women.[79] Do not let demons affect our ability to have children. Do not let our foodstuffs and wealth be subject to loss. Bestow upon us the capability of attaining wealth. Carry out the activities entrusted to you.

Transliteration of 'Dzam gling spyi bsangs *text*

(i) kyai'/ lha ri gangs dkar rtse mo na / rje yi sku mkhar ldems se ldems / rmang bzhi nag po'i lcags las byas / log (= logs) gzhi (= bzhi) gsal ba'i dung las byas / zur bzhi rin chen gser las byas / kha bad sngon po'i g.yu las byas / mu man thog phug lcam rnams byas / shel dang byi ru'i ka gdung byas / gser sgo khra bo'i (= bo) thibs se thibs / mda' yab dkar dmar mda' dang mdung / ba dan ru mtshon spu ru ru / log (= logs) la na bun thal ma thul / rmang la gtsang tshang (= chab) me re re /

(ii) de 'dra'i mkhar gyi shar sgo na / lha g.yag dkar po khra ma khrol / de 'dra'i mkhar gyi lho sgo na / lha rta ngang dkar springs se springs / de 'dra'i mkhar gyi nub sgo na / stag gzig dom dred khro lo lo / de 'dra'i mkhar gyi byang sgo na / 'dab chags 'phur lding lings se lings /

(iii) de 'dra'i mkhar gyi nang shad na / gnyan chen drag po thang lha bzhugs / dung gi mi pho dkar po la / ya mtshan g.yu yi rmin (= smin) ma can / phyag g.yas sba lcags (= lcag) tshigs gsum bsnams / phyag g.yon shel dkar phreng ba 'dren / mu men gser gyi rked rags bcings / chibs su ngang dkar g.yu rngog chibs / gser srab g.yu mthul sbrings se sbrings / dar gdan dung sga wangs se wangs / A long

relates to pedestrian concerns and immediate needs (*thun-mong gi dngos-grub*) of the ritualists and their sponsors. *dNgos-grub* can be defined as the capability, potentiality or power for realizing something desired in its entirety. It is therefore, the quality that permits the attainment of personal well being, material wealth and social prestige rather than the acquisition itself.

[78] *rMa-g.yang zas*. It connotes foods that are tasty, nourishing and well preserved.

[79] The import of this line is not entirely clear. It appears to signify that Thang-lha and his circle should insure that women do not interfere in the ritual activities of men.

yob chen khrol lo lo / rnga rngog na bun 'thibs se 'thibs / ma thogs gnas 'dir myur du byon /

(iv) kyai / skyod do gnyan sras dbyings nas skyod / bskul lo gnyan sras drag po'i (= pos) bskul / ngang dkar g.yu rngog bang re 'gyogs (= mgyogs) / sba lcag tshigs gsum bag re tsha / 'khor du gnyan dmag 'bum gyis bskor / kun kyang mi dkar rta dkar can / ba dan dkar po klad la 'phyar / gsol ba mchod pa bka' bzhin byed / gsol ba'i tshe na ngo ma chung / sbad pa'i tshe na mthu ma chung / gtang ba'i dus na bang ma zhan / ma thogs gnas 'dir myur du byon /

(v) kyai / khyed la mchod pa 'bul ba ni / lha g.yag dkar po 'od can dang / lha rta ngang dkar g.yu rngog dang / lha lug dkar po 'od can dang / lha rwa (= ra) ra tshe mo ru bzang dang / gser skyems dkar mngar gtor ma dang / sba dkar gling bu'i gsungs snyan dang / de 'dra'i las kyi (= kyis) mchod pa 'bul /

(vi) kyai / g.yas kyi mda' ra ba / za ram skyes bu drug / stag dong gzig shubs can / brgyan pa'i bsangs mchod 'bul ***/ bcol ba'i 'phrin las mdzod ***/ g.yon gyi mdung 'dzin pa / sbid lha sprul pa yang / *** /*** / sngon gyi shug (= shul) 'tshol ba / yab btsan zhal dkar la / btsan zhag dmar po bsnams / *** / *** / slad kyi rjes 'dren pa / ni ra ya (= g.ya') mar (= dmar) ni / gser mdung dmar po bsnams / *** / *** /

/ ***/ ***/ These two lines are attached to each of the deities subsequently mentioned in the text: / brgyan pa'i bsangs mchod 'bul / bcol ba'i 'phrin las mdzod /.

(vii) thang lha'i yab smos pa / 'od de gung rgyal lags / *** / *** / khab kyi snga shos ma / lha mo mtsho dar sman / dung gi cha ga can / *** / *** / khab kyi phyi shol (= shos) ma / gnam mtsho phyug mo ni / chu rta sngon po chibs / *** / *** /

(viii) sku lha'i cung (= gcung) po ba / thang sprin nor dkar yang (= g.yang) / dar dkar na bza' gsol / *** / *** / sku lha'i sras po ba / thang lha'i 'phyor bo ni / dkar po shel sgong can / *** / *** /sku lha'i zhang po ba / 'brong snyan (= rnyan) ser po lags / stag mo grus ma chibs / *** / *** /

(ix) phyi yi blon po ba / sma (= rma) chen spom ra ni / dkar po phud (= 'phun) dmar can / *** / *** / nang gi blon po ba / 'gul ring 'phag rtag ni / sngon po g.yu rngog chibs / *** / *** / shar gyi dmag dpon pa / bsams (= bsam) gtan gangs bzang ni / ru dar dkar po 'phyar / *** / *** / lho yi dmag dpon pa / dam chen (= can) mgar nag ni / ru dar nag po 'phyar / *** / *** / nub gyi dmag dpon pa / khong khyim zhal dkar ni / btsan rta mdar po chibs / *** / *** / byang gi dmag dpon ba / spo che be yang ni / ru dar ser po 'phyar / *** / *** /

(x) sku lha'i lcam mo ba / 'bri lam gangs bzang ni / g.yu yi zur phud can / *** / *** / thang lha'i 'bri rdzi ba / lag gsor phyug mo lags / *** / *** / thang lha'i rwa (= ra) rdzi ba / khyo ra btsan po yang / *** / *** / thang lha'i khyi rdzi ba / ya (= g.ya) dmar stag btsan lags / *** / *** /

(xi) khyed la dngos grub zhu ba ni / bdag dang sgyu (= rgyu) sbyor yon bdag la / grags pa gtam gyi dngos grub zhu / phan pa dar ba'i dngos grub zhu / rkang bzhi nor gyi dngos grub zhu / rma g.yang zas kyi dngos grub zhu / 'jam snyan gos gyi dngos grub zhu / khyed la 'phrin las zhu ba ni / dar ma gri la ma skur cig / mo btsun gtam la ma g.yeng cig / sri'u 'dre la ma skur cig / zas nor god la ma skur cig / nor gyi dngos grub bdag la stsol / bcol ba'i 'phrin las 'grub par mdzod /

An untitled *gsol-kha* for gNyan-chen thang-lha belonging to the sTag-lung subsect preserves to a remarkable degree the prosody of works in the Tun-huang manuscripts.[80] Although there is some Buddhist doctrinal seepage into the text, it retains the archaic structural features of five syllables to a line, and the question and answer parallelism in the verses that is characteristic of the riddle format of yore. Another ancient feature is the use of the caesura *ni* in some of the verses, rendered in translation by 'yes'. This regular punctuation of the verses in this manner places added emphasis on the subject. The use of the particle *ni* as a caesura and the regular occurrence of five syllables per line are attested in the Tun-huang manuscripts.

[80] This untitled *gsol-kha* is part of a twenty-folio sTag-lung collection of texts for Thang-lha (folios 14–20). It is attributed to Ngag-dbang bstan-pa'i nyi-ma (18th or 19th century) but surely this lama of the sTag-lung rma-sprul lineage compiled it from earlier sources. For a discussion of this collection see Bellezza 1997, p. 76 (fn. 50).

The text begins by naming the standard mother and father of Thang-lha (para i). This is followed by a poetic description of his country and two of his Buddhist names (para i). Next his attributes and horse are recounted in split verses, and then trisyllabic indicators are used to dramatically describe his mount (para ii). His mount is called *ngang-dkar*, literally: 'white goose', which describes the light orange color of horses. In the third stanza of this excerpt, Thang-lha is equated with various meteorological phenomena. The excerpt concludes with requests and gifts to the mountain god. The functions of preventing madness and protecting children noted in the text are very much acknowledged by the spirit-mediums. Insanity is usually thought to be the result of demonic possession and according to the *lha-pa,* deities such as Thang-lha have the power to cure it:[81]

> (i) The father of sKu-lha is named. He is 'Od-de gung-rgyal. The mother of sKu-lha is named. She is g.Yu-bya gshog-cig (One Wing Turquoise Bird). sKu-lha himself is called the son of the *gnyan* Yar-bzhur. The country he resides in was given a name. It is the stepped, swirling, verdant place of 'Dam-shos nor-mo. His delightful place of residence is ever blue (green), summer and winter. It is the pleasing country of the *lha.* The name given to him by humans was Son of the gNyan Yar-bzhur. The name given to him by the *lha* was Dri-za'i rgyal-po (King of the Smell Eaters), it was Zur-phud-lnga. The secret name bestowed upon him was rDo-rje dbyings-phyug 'bar (Blazing Adamantine Space Riches).
>
> (ii) What does he wear on his body, yes, he wears a white silk *ras-gu* (gown). What does he grasp in his right hand, yes, he holds a white cane horsewhip. What does he grasp in his left hand, yes, he holds a white crystal rosary. It is brilliant white *sha ra ra.*[82] What does he ride as his mount, yes, he rides a light orange [horse] with a white face. On his light orange [horse] with a white face is a turquoise halter *brengs se brengs,*[83] a golden bridle *si li li,*[84] a *dar-bstan* (silk saddle-mat) *pu ru ru,*[85] and a conch white saddle *wangs se wangs.*[86] It has a turquoise mane *bun ne bun,*[87] a conch white tail *shed de shed,*[88] and golden hoofs *lhangs se lhangs.*[89]
>
> (iii) On your head turquoise mists are rising up. Always, summer and winter, they are rising up. Outside there is a raging blizzard. All day and night it is raging. Sleet spreads forth from your person. Always, spring and autumn, it is spreading. You are the great powerful *skyes-mchog* (holy man). Your light orange [horse] is very powerful. With the whip in your hand you vigorously beat it. We offer you the mandatory gift of the first piece of gold. Your targeted work functions are subduing the *myo 'dre* (demons of madness), cutting the life-force of the enemies and taking care of children. Please receive these ornamented *gtor-ma.* Carry out the activities entrusted to you.[90]

[81] 14b, ln. 5 to 16b, ln. 2.
[82] *Sha ra ra* conveys the action of the beads on the string of the rosary falling down one after the other.
[83] *Brengs se brengs* depicts the tautness of the halter caused by the pulling of the rider.
[84] *Si li li* is the onomatopoeia for the jingling sound made by the bridle.
[85] *Pu ru ru* conveys the fluttering or flapping movement of the mat.
[86] *Wangs se wangs* portrays the rocking movement of the saddle.

Transliteration of the sTag-lung pa gNyan-chen thang-lha gsol-kha *excerpt*

(i) sku lha'i yab smos pa / 'od de gung rgyal lags / sku lha'i yum smos pa / g.yu bya gshog cig lags / sku lha'i nyis (= nyid) smos pa / yar zhur gnyan gyi sras / bzhugs yul mtshan gsol ba / 'dam shos nor ma'i ljongs / khyer kha g.yu ljang 'khyil / dbyar med dgun med sngo / bzhugs yul nyam (= nyams) re dga' / dgyes so lha yi yul / mi chos mtshan gsol ba / yar bzhur gnyan gyi sras / lha chos mtshan gsol ba / dri za'i rgyal po lags / zur phud lnga pa lags / gsang ba'i mtshan gsol ba / rdo rje dbyings phyug 'bar /

(ii) sku la ci gsol na / dar dkar ras gu gsol / g.yas na ci bsnams na / sba lcags (= lcag) dkar po rnams (= bsnams) / g.yon na ci bsnams na / shel dkar phreng ba bsnams / dkar dwangs sha ra ra / chibs su ci chibs na / ngang dkar zhur po chibs / ngang dkar zhur po la / g.yu mthur breng (= brengs) se brengs / gser srab si li li / dar stan pu ru ru / dung sga wangs se wangs / g.yu rngog bun ne bun / dung rnga shad de shad / gser rmig lhangs se lhangs /

[87] *Bun ne bun* conveys the shaking movement of the mane, which is like the boiling of water.
[88] *Shed de shed* shows the vigorous quivering of the tail with the hairs propelling straight out.
[89] *Lhangs se lhangs* probably simulates the thunderous resonance of the hoofs.
[90] This verse is followed by a fragmentary litany of the deities in the circle of Thang-lha, many of which are also found in *'Dzam gling spyi bsangs.* The final part of the text contains the usual list of requests for Thang-lha regarding the health and well-being of the ritualists and their circle of benefactors.

(iii) dbu la g.yu bun mthul (= 'thul) dbyar med dgun med 'thul / phyi nas bu yug 'tshub / nyin med mtshan med 'tshub / sku las khu 'phangs phros (= 'phros) ston med dpyid med 'phro / skyes mchog mthu re che / ngang dkar dpung re drag / phyag lcags brab re tsha / gser phud ya gcig ni / gnyan cing (= zhing) mchod par 'bul / phrin las skul phog pa / myo 'dre 'dul ba yin / dgra srog gcod pa yin / sri'u gsol ba yin / brgyan pa'i gtor ma bzhes / bcol ba'i phrin las mdzod /

In order to fully appreciate the significance of the mountain and lake deities to indigenous cultural traditions it is essential to recognize their ancient genealogical function. It is their role as cosmogonic figures that gave rise to the great clans, in which the native divinities find their most intimate connection with the Tibetans. My inquiries show however, that in Upper Tibet (as in most other Tibetan cultural regions), the cultural expressions of the ancestral functions of the mountains and lakes are now nearly extinct. It would appear that centuries of Buddhist doctrinal inculcation and the imposition of the Indian pantheon and cosmogonies have largely erased the earlier collective memory of the mountain and lake progenitors. In most Bon and Buddhist ritual literature, recognition of these forebears has been reduced to a convention whereby the indigenous deities receive titles such as *a-myes* (grandfather), *yum, A-ma* (mother), *jo-bo* (elder brother), and *jo-mo* (elder sister). Nevertheless, the extant indigenous cosmogonies found in works such as *mKhas pa lde'u* and *dBu nag mi'u 'dra chags*, as well as other sources,[91] espouse the view that both Tibetans and their native divinities originated from the celestial *phywa* and *dmu* deities.

It is as sacred ancestors that the human-like personality and activities of the indigenous pantheon are best understood. Just like human members of society, the deities are thought to both help and hinder by the various transactions they engage in. In the native context, the *lha-pa* of Upper Tibet embody not just the spirits of great masses of rock and water, but the essence of their people, in a relationship that potentially pre-dates lamaist forms of religion. As healers, counselors, generals, and prophets these divinities articulate their oneness with human beings through a common ancestry. This kinship is one of the pillars on which Tibetan indigenous tradition rests, and I would consider that the origins of phenomena such as spirit-mediumship are probably closely bound to it.

In a rare text entitled *A Fully Illuminated View of the Paternal Lineages* (*Pha rabs*)[92] the ancestry of the Tibetans is connected to gNyan-chen thang-lha and other members of his divine lineage.[93] However, the

[91] See Part Four, section iii, pp. 393–401 for a discussion of Bon cosmogony.

[92] *Pha rab* (= *rabs*) *'thongs* (= *mthong*) *ba skun* (= *kun*) *gsel* (= *gsal*). This text has five folios with four lines of *dbu-can* script on each folio (except the title page). Illustrative of considerable age, the high-quality handmade paper on which it was written has browned heavily and is partly worm eaten. I recovered it from a pile of discarded folios being sold to tourists in Kathmandu by those with no understanding of the Tibetan language. Its source indicates that it belonged to a Tamang family or monastery no longer involved in the reading or ceremonial performance of the text. As adherents of Tibetan Buddhism in Nepal migrate down country, die off, or acquire new editions of texts, old manuscripts are regularly sold off to the tourist trade. The colophon reads: "This text was written by Lama mThar-phyin rgya-mtsho of the eight Pha-chen bsdong*. The patrons are the brothers of the Phran-brag pa' ṇi (Thandapani) locale. The owner of the text is the *bla-brang* (lama's residence) of rTsang-rigs monastery, in the land of Sa'u gangs-yul (Nubakot district), where it was written. Written in the Earth-Snake Year, Second Month, Twelfth Day." (*'di yig ge 'bris pa'i bla ma thar byin* (= *mthar phyin*) *rgyam thogs* (= *rgya mtsho*) *pha chen bsdong pa'i brgyad pa yin no / pha mtshan dpun* (= *spun*) *ta bdan sa phran phrag* (= *brag*) *pa' ṇi yin / yi ge bdag 'byed 'di ni sa'u gang yul rtsang rigs mgon* (= *dgon*) *pa'i blab sprang* (= *bla brang*) *du bris pa'o / sa sbrul lo'i zla ba gnyis pa'i tshes pa bcu gnyis la bris pa'o /*.

* This alternative spelling may denote one of the subsidiary lineages of the lDong clan.

The *Pha rabs* was procured along with another manuscript written on matching paper detailing the lore (*rus-mdzod*) of the lDong clan. Unfortunately, this latter text is missing a substantial number of folios. It should be noted that there are several Tibetan manuscripts from Nepal that accord the lDong clan a central role in the origin myth of the Tamang (Ramble 2003: 75, 76).

[93] The ancient ancestral function of Thang-lha is dimly recognized in a popular folktale of sNying-drung, 'Dam-gzhung county: Sometime in the past, a woman of the Seng-tshang family was weaving inside her tent. Hail began to fall gently from the sky and some entered her tent through the *gung-khebs* (sky-flap) and fell on her lap. She also swallowed some of the hail, and in due course she gave birth to Thang-lha's son. Another version of the story has it that this woman slept with the mountain god in her dreams. The result of this union was a son named Sengge dmag-dpon (Lion General), who grew up to be very powerful and handsome. He was the area's natural leader, and would guide caravans up north to collect salt because he could protect his people from bandits. When the traders would take their salt down south to exchange for grain, Sengge dmag-dpon and his yaks could cross the Yar-lung gtsang-po without the aid of a ferry. Once he went to Yar 'brog g.yu-mtsho, passing by the mountain of a local *gzhi-bdag* called mGar-rtse lha-mo. It was customary for travelers to dismount in front of this mountain, out of respect for the goddess, but Sengge dmag-dpon rode right past, angering her. To take revenge she killed his horse. The enraged Sengge dmag-dpon took the skin of his freshly killed horse and put it over mGar-rtse lha-mo's *gsas-mkhar* (shrine), binding

Pha rabs presents special problems of interpretation because the recorded lore does not appear to be fully integral (despite the folios being sequentially numbered), thus there is considerable ambiguity regarding the generational succession of the deities. The contents are also marked by faulty and uncertain spellings, compounding difficulties of comprehension. The parochial spelling *rus-rug* (six clans) for *rus-drug* is a telltale sign that the writer was a sTod-skad (Western Tibet dialect) speaker, where it is commonplace to pronounce 'six' as a second syllable in this manner. The ambiguity permeating the chain of cosmogonic events in the *Pha rabs* seems to suggest that when a certain Lama mThar-phyin committed it to writing, the tradition had already undergone some degeneration. Clearly, the lore contained within was allied to the ancient bardic tradition, which was probably preserved by a class of religious functionaries known as *pha-jo.* The white turban-clad *pha-jo* are still active in western Nepal where they carry out clan related rituals.[94] The *Pha rabs* appears to document the emigration of members of the lDong clan into Nepal. This migrant group probably originally hailed from the greater gNyan-chen thang-lha region, as the preponderance of deities from this area implies. The indigenous cultural content of the text and the archaic phraseology in which it is couched, may well demonstrate that its preservers came to Nepal before the second diffusion of Buddhism (*bstan-pa phyi-dar*).[95] It is the Tamang ethnic groups in Nepal that are closely identified with the lDong clan, and the *Pha rabs* under examination is one of their genealogical texts.

it with the animal's intestines. He then fired three arrows (alternatively three bullets) at the *gsas-mkhar,* causing the goddess in the form of a black cat to jump out and run away. From that time on, the spirit-mediums for mGar-rtse lha-mo could no longer embody her.

[94] For example, in the village of Ros, in Nub-ri, the dPon-bzang and Yur-kong lineages still have *pha-jo* (Tshe-dbang bstan 'dzin and Tshe-ring dbang-rgyal respectively). The two *pha-jo* prepare offerings for the eight local ancestral and protective spirits, which figure in Ros's three *lha-bsangs* (propitiation of gods with incense) observances, held between the second and fourth lunar months. The *pha-jo* also raise the *pho-shing* (father wood), the central mast of the *lha-dar* (flags for the *yul-lha* sPung-rgyan) during the Lo-gsar (New Year) celebration. This information was collected during fieldwork in 1998, conducted in conjunction with Dr. Geoff Childs.

[95] There are oral traditions preserved in Nepal tracing the movement of Tibetans into the Himalaya in the aftermath of the fall of Imperial Tibet. For instance, the highest status lineage of Nub-ri, the mNga' bdag, claim their descent from ministers of the sPu-rgyal state who came to the region with the collapse of dynastic rule.

The *Pha rabs* dispenses with the elaborate cosmogonic progression involving the coming of existence and the celestial *phywa* and *dmu* deities found in the more extensive indigenous origin myths of Tibet. Instead it begins with 'O-lde gung-rgyal, a mountain deity who is a descendant of the *phywa.* Among his five children is gNyan-chen thang-lha (Thang-lha yab-bzhur), who through his scion Thang-sras mchor-po and his granddaughter, appear to give birth to the lDong clan (paras i, ii). The *Pha rabs* insists that other well known mountain divinities that descended from 'O-lde gung-rgyal, such as rMa-chen pom-ra (A-mdo), 'Bri-lam gangs-bzang (near Thang-lha) and Lha-lcam kham-pa (west side of gNam-mtsho), disappeared into the sky and thus did not partake in the creation of humans. The text clearly favors gThang-lha and Thang-sras mchor-po (located immediately north of his father). The cosmogonic sequence expounded after the appearance of the goddess Thogs dog-mo is not certain (para iii). It appears that she may be the maternal ancestor of the lDong because she remains behind, presumably to serve as the progenetrix of the clan. After her, the scion of the lDong, Lha-mu khri-khrig-ka, leaves the heavens and descends to Gangs-dkar sha-med mountain (para iii).

Pha rabs now skips to four other members of the four or six proto-clans of Tibet:[96] sTong, 'A-zha, Zhang-zhung-smra, and Sum-pa, which reside on different parts of a metaphorical tree (paras iv–vi). Three of these four clans have a totemic clan animal: 'A-zha—small brown musk deer; Zhang zhung—conch white male elephant; and Sum-pa—iron female yak hybrid. In the contemporary period, the tradition of clan animals in Upper Tibet is virtually defunct. I have discovered faint traces of a totemic tradition in the contiguous Rus 'thor ('Brong-pa county) and Seng 'khor (sGer-rtse county), regions that are renowned for having the highest proportion of older clans and clan traditions in the Byang-thang (Dang-ra g.yu-mtsho notwithstanding). The *rus-lha* (clan deity)[97] of the Seng 'khor clan is A-bse-gro rwa-dkar (Brown A-bse White Horns), while the *rus-lha* of the

[96] Rus-chen-bzhi: Se 'a-zha, sTong sum-pa, lDong mi-nyag/lDong me-nyag, and sMra zhang-zhung. Rus-chen-drug/Bod mi'u gdung-drug: Se, rMu, lDong, sTong, dBra, and 'Bru. For an analysis of these tribal groupings see Stein 1959.

[97] *Rus-lha/rus kyi lha* are protective deities common to an entire clan. As indicated by the *Pha rabs,* they may have once also held an ancestral function for the clans. Contemporary Upper Tibetans often confuse *rus-lha* with *pho-lha* and *phugs-lha,* but these latter two types of gods are mainly personal and household protectors.

dPon-pa clan is dPon-btsan kham-nag (Dark Brown Leader bTsan), a deity in the circle of A-myes rma-chen. An indication that these were zoomorphic *rus-lha* is that the kinds of color adjectives used to describe them are customarily applied to animals. The inclusion of horns on one of the gods is also an excellent indication.[98] In the remote valleys of the Nepal Himalaya, zoomorphic *rus-lha* are still present in contemporary Bodic cultures. My fieldwork in Nub-ri shows that the three lower status (older) lineages of dPon-bzang, Yur-kong and Chung-dman/Phyugs-min have clan deities (locally called *pho-lha*) with white sheep and bay-colored yak (*g.yag-kham-pa*) manifestations. Similarly, the four clans of the Thakali of the Kali Gandaki valley have clan deities in zoomorphic forms, including a colored bird, lioness, elephant, and *chu-srin* (crocodile-like water-spirit), which appear on a sandalwood tree (Gauchan and Vinding 1977: 110–113). These latter three deities control the rain, wind, clouds and mountains; and the fertility of crops and living beings (*ibid.*: 118).

Pha rabs goes on to list four pairs of clans, asserting that each pair shares a common origin (para vi). This is followed by alternative clan and lineage classifications, the most intriguing of which are the clans of the Thirteen Grandmothers (Phyi-mo bcu-bsum).[99] This ostensibly was an ancient matrilineal and/or matriarchal clan tradition.[100] Similarly, a matrilineal tradition may be implicit in the text entitled *Voice of the Sky Dragon: Cloud Offerings of the Great gNyan of the*

[98] Numerous interviews with senior Seng 'khor and dPon-pa clan members establish that they are no longer aware of the iconography of their *rus-lha*.

[99] My fieldwork has demonstrated that in Gu-ge (rTsa-mda' county), there is a class of dominant *yul-lha* that carries the appellation *I-pi* (grandmother). These deities come in the form of *I-pi klu-mo* and *I-pi lha-mo*, and sometimes share a valley territory with a *btsan* deity. Among the most famous examples are I-pi gyam-nye of mDa' pa*, I-pi brag-skyed kyo-sgo srungs-ma of gSer-gam*, I-pi Mug-gyam gyi kha-la-ma of sBa-lu mkhar*, and I-pi dkar-sman and I-pi ser-gyu of Ma-nam.

* The spellings for these three deities came from the inscriptions accompanying their frescos at the Mang-brag cave temple (14th century?), in Gu-ge.

[100] Gibson (1995: 254, 255), on the basis of the naming of the six Tibetan kings who succeeded King gNya' khri after their mothers and the customary intervention of queens on behalf of their younger sons, argues that this suggests maternal clans exerted significant influence on the royal institution. He also notes from this evidence and the nature of polyandrous alliances, that the sacral element of kingship may have been passed on through the female line, if not an actual matrilineal system of kingship being in place. Dr. Charles Ramble (in personal communication) reports that a text that seems to preserve a matrilineal dynastic succession has recently surfaced.

Slate [Mountains] and Meadows.[101] In this nominally Buddhacized *gsol-kha*, only a grandmother is provided as the ultimate ancestor of gNyan-chen g.ya' spangs, an important *yul-lha* of Shan-rtsa. She is described as follows: "The *phyi-mo* (grandmother) of you great *gnyan* man is 'Brug-rgyal sman-cig (Only sMan Queen Dragon), a blue turquoise woman. On her body she wears aqueous silk (*chu-dar*) clothes.[102] In her hands she holds the victory banner of the *chu-srin*. She rides a turquoise blue female yak mount." The *chu-srin* victory banner of the grandmother goddess symbolizes her mastery over the watery lower world. *Pha rabs* concludes with the mention of five great national lineages, which includes Tibet and her immediate neighbors:

> (i) The three older brothers and sisters of 'O-bde gung-rgyal[103] have flown away into the sky. The descending *yab-lha* (father deity/divine father), god of the plain, 'O-de'i gung-rgyal[104] came down. He mated with Thang-sman-mo (Female sMan of the Plain) and begot the progeny of five brothers and sisters. The names of these five are: Thang-lha yab-bzhud,[105] dMan-chen pong-ra,[106] Thang-sku bu-kar, 'Bri-lam gangs-bzang (Female Yak Path Good Mountain) and the mountain of Lha-lcam kham-pa (Bay-Colored Lady Lha). The four younger progeny of brothers and sisters passed into the *lha-yul* (divine realm) in the sky. The oldest son Thang-lha yab-bzhud mated with gNam-mtsho phyug-mo and begot Thang-sras mchor-po (Handsome Son of the Plain) and Klu-lcam (Klu Lady).
>
> (ii) The happy relatives of the Klu-mo were conducted beyond to the land of the *klu*. The-chen srid-pa'i rgyal-po (King of Existence Great The)[107] Thang-sras mchor-po mated with Lha-mo srid-mtsho dpal-mo

[101] *gNyan chen g.ya' spangs pa'i mchod sprin* nam mkha' 'brug sgra*, compiled by Ngag-dbang bstan-pa'i rdo-rje, the abbot of rTa-nag thub-bstan, a Sa-skya monastery in rTa-nag (in bZhad-mthong-smon county), folios 1b, 2a.

* *mChod-sprin* connotes offerings that are very broad and complete.

[102] A diaphanous blue-colored material.

[103] The preferred modern spelling is 'O-lde gung-rgyal. This deity finds mention in the Tun-huang manuscripts such as *IOL 734*, ln. 193: 'O-de gung-rgyal.

[104] Spelling as in the text. In the Lhasa *rdo-ring* (pillar) treaty inscription of circa 851 (east side, ln. 34), *yab-lha*, a term of address expressing great respect, is also used to refer to the *btsan-po* (king) Khri-lde srong-brtsan. See *Bod btsan po'i skabs kyi gna' rtsom gces bsdus slob deb*, p. 8.

[105] The more common spelling is: Thang-lha yar-bzhur (Snub Nosed God of the Plain).

[106] This is the mountain god rMa-chen pom-ra.

[107] The *the/thel/the'u-rang* is a class of semi-divine spirits. For numerous examples see Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956.

(Glorious Lady Goddess Lake of Existence)[108] and begot eleven brothers and sisters. The names of these five brothers are: sTong-lha mu-gu, rGyal-chen stab-ra, Ga-sa stags-yas, Mi'i-rje lha-mgon, and Mu-tshogs bri-ka. The names of the six sisters are: sDong-lha su-mo, gNam-sman dkar-mo, bTsug-lag sman-cig, Thogs sman-dkar, Gangs-dkar sha-med, and gNam-phyi gung-rgyal.

(iii) Four of the brothers and five of the sisters had no mates on earth and flew away to the sky. The elder sister Thogs dog-mo[109] remained. In the beginning the god of the lDong descended as man, the son of the grandfather *ldong* clan. Among them all, the youngest son is Lha-mu khri-khrig-ka. When the time was appropriate Lha-mu khri-khrig-ka descended from above through the thirteen levels of the *gung* (sky), and then landed on the center of Ri-rgyal lhun-po (the world-mountain), from whence he landed on nine peaks, from whence he landed on the eight snowy peaks, and from whence he landed on Gangs-dkar sha-med.[110] It is said to be descended from the divisions of the sky.[111]

(iv) On the south side of the root of the tree exists A-zhang tshong gi gla-ba smug-chung (Small Brown Musk Deer of the Business Maternal Uncle).[112] There are thirteen divisions of the A-zhang clan etc. [who repose] steadfastly at the tree beside the earth. On a branch on the west side of the dark blue *bum-pa* (vase) tree of the sMra, are the six clans called sMra or sMra mi'u-dgu (Nine Little Men of sMra).

(v) The [deities] that have descended from the divisions of the sky: On the west side of the tree's root exists Dung-glang dkar-po (Conch White Male Elephant) of Zhang-zhung. The three royal and ministerial lineages of Zhang-zhung [repose] steadfastly on the tree beside the earth. On a branch on the north side of the tree exists dNgul kyi ri-bo dkar-po (White Mountain of Silver) of the sTong. It is said that the four *rje* (lords) and eight *khol* (servants) of the sTong descended from the divisions of the sky.

(vi) On the root in the center of the tree exists lCags kyi mdzo-mo ru-ring (Female Yak Hybrid Long Horns of Iron)[113] of the Sum-pa.

[108] This might refer to Lha-mo mtsho-dar, a glacial tarn on the northern flanks of gNyan-chen thang-lha.
[109] Spelling as in the text. This could be the same goddess as sDong-lha su-mo of the preceding paragraph.
[110] Probably the famous *bstan-ma/brtan-ma* goddess known as Jo-mo gangs-dkar, located in the gNyan-chen thang-lha range.
[111] The lDong clan? The precise connection of this line with those preceding it is ambiguous.
[112] As indicated in the spelling found in para vi, A-zhang (Maternal Uncle) is synonymous with the 'A-zha clan of the Rus-chen-bzhi.
[113] Iron in this context most probably refers to a dark blue color.

The thirteen divisions of the Sum-pa repose steadfastly on the tree beside the earth. It is such that the eight great clans exist: together sDong[114] and Mi-nyag count as one. The two [clans] Se and 'A-zha count as one. The two [clans] sTong and Sum-pa count as one. The two [clans] sMra and Zhang-zhung count as one. [These clans] are similar because it is not suitable to separate them.

(vii) Moreover, there are the thirteen *phyi-mo* (grandmothers) of the clans, 1400 different clans and the powerful indomitable twelve voices of the [clans]. There are eighteen great divisions of people. There are four types of human lineages not included and there are four types of humans not connected [to the clans]. [There are] males, females, neuter, etc. These are the demonstrable sources that exist for the human clans. There are four great nations (*mi-chen-po bzhi*).[115] The four are the Dharma lineage of India, the Gyim-shang lineage of China, the Gyim-shang lineage of Mongolia and the Jewel lineage of sTag-gzig (Persia). The fifth is the sPu rgyal lineage of Tibet.

Transliteration of the Pha rabs mthong ba kun gsal *text*

(i) 'od bde gung rgyal / gcen po gsum dang sring mo ni nam mkha' las 'phur la thal lo / yab lha thang lha lha mar lha rnams kyi / 'od de'i gung rgyal mar [la] lhag pa'i lha / thangs (= thang) sman mo dang bshos pas / sras ni ming sring lnga ru srid do / de rnams gyi (= kyi) mtshan ni / thang lha yab bzhud / dman chen pong ra (= rma chen spom ra) / thang sku bu kar / bris (= 'bri) lam gang (= gangs) bzang / lha lcam kham pa'i ri dang lnga'o / sras po chung ba ming sring bzhi ni nam mkha' na / lha'i yul na thal lo / sras che ba thang lha yab zhud (= bzhud) dang / gnam mtsho phyug mo bshos pa'i sras ni / thang sras 'byor pa (= mchor po) dang / klu lcam /

(ii) dang 'dran ma nyan klu mo yin pas klu'i yul du thal lho (= lo) / lha rnams the chen srid pa'i rgyal po dang thang sras 'byor pa (= mchor po) / lha mo srid mtshon (= mtsho) dpal mo bshos pa'i sras / ming srid (= sring) bcu gcig srid do / de rnams gyis (= kyi) mtshan ni / stong lha mu gu / rgyal chen stab ra / ga sa stags yas / mi'i rjes (= rje) lha gon (= mgon) / mu tshogs bri ka dang / lnga ni ming po yin no / sring mo drugs (= drug) ni sdong lha su mo

[114] Spelling as in the text.
[115] This is followed by the line: "*yang du mi bar bshing rta'i lugs ni*", which seems to speak of 'the tradition of horse wagon middle people'

rnams (= gnam) sman dkar mo btsug lag sman cig / thogs sman dkar / dgang (= gangs) dkar sha me (= med) / rnams gyis (= gnam phyi) gung rgyal dang drug yin no /

(iii) pho pa me zhi (= bzhi) po dang / sring mo drug ni sa thog nas / gnyen kyi (= gyi) las med pas / nam mkha' la 'phur te thal lo / sring mo thogs dug (= dog) mo yin pa / ldong lha thog mi babs pa de pha chen ldong kyi bu lags so / sras po thams cad kyis (= kyi) chung shog (= shos) bde lha mu khri khrig ka yin pa / lha mu khri khri (= khrig) ka ni las kyi mtshams la babs nas / de nas cu (= bcu) gsum gung gyis (= gi) sa dang / steng nas babs so / de nas dbus kyi ri rgyal lhun po la babs so / de nas gu'i rtse la babs so / de nas gang (= gangs) dkar po brgyad kyis steng na babs so / de nas gang (= gangs) dkar shar (= sha) med la babs so / pa la sogs ni nam (= gnam) nas bab pa'i sde tshan lags skad /

(iv) lho phyogs kyi sdong po'i rtsa ba ru / A zhang tshong gi bla (= gla) ba rmug (= smug) chung la srid de / A zhang sde tshan bcug (= bcu) gsum lag (= la) sogs pa / sa la bsdong po'i de tsan (= sde tshan) no / nub phyogs kyi yal ga'i steng du / smra thing kyi (= gi) bum pa'i sdong po la srid de / smra rus rug (= drug) ces bya bar 'am / smra mi'u dgu zhes bya byung de (= ste) /

(v) gnam nas bab pa'i de (= sde) tsan (= tshan) no / nub phyogs sdong po'i rtsa ba ru / zhang zhung dung glang dkar po la srid de / zhang zhung rgyal rig (= rigs) dang blon rigs lag sum te (= gsum ste) / sa la sdong po'i sdeng tsan (= sde tshan) yin / byang phyogs yal ga'i steng du / tong (= stong) dngul kyis (= gyi) ri bo dkar po la srid de / sdong rje zhi (= bzhi) khol gyad (= brgyad) la sogs pa / gnam nas bab pa'i sde tsan (tshan) lags skad /

(vi) dbus phyogs sdong po'i rtsa ba ru / gsum (= sum) pa lcags kyi mdzo mo ru ring bar srid de / gsum pa'i sde tsan (= tshan) pa bcug (= bcu) gsum la sogs pa / sa la bsdong po'i sde tsan lag (= tshan lags) te / rus chen brgyad po 'di srid sro par gyur pa na / phyogs cig (= gcig) bar de sdra sdong mi nyag cig du sgrang (= bgrangs) / se dang 'a zha gnyis cig tu rtsis / stong dang gsum (= sum) pa gnyis cig du (= gcig tu) rtsis / smra dang zhang zhung gnyis cig du (= gcig tu) rtsis ba ni / phyogs cig (= gcig) pa'i phyir ro / rus de ni so sor ste mi rung /

(vii) gzhan yang rus kyis (= kyi) phyi mo bcug (= bcu) gsum lus rus mi mthun pa stong dang bzhi brgyad (= brgya) skad gi (= kyi) snus (= snu) bu bthu (= mthu) ba bcus (= bcu) gnyis / 'bob cod kyi mi sde chen po bco brgyad / gar ma rtog (= gtogs) kyi mi bzhi rigs las khyal gyi mi bzhi / pho dang mo dang ma ning la sogs pa rnams ni / mi'u (= mi'i) rus la srid pa'i byung 'khung (= 'byung khungs) brten (= bstan) pa'o / mi chen po bzhi la / yang du mi bar bshing rta'i lugs ni / rgya gar chos kyi rigs dang cig (= gcig) / gyim shang rgya nag gi rigs dang gnyis / gyim shang hor gi = gyi) rigs dang gsum / stags (= stag) gzigs (= gzig) nor gi (= gyi) rigs dang bzhi / phur (= spu) rgyal bod kyi rigs dang lnga'o /

In the *Pha rabs* we saw how the four proto-clans of Tibet are closely related to the mountain god 'O-lde gung-rgyal and how each of them possesses a protective deity. These same themes are found in the introductory *cho-rabs* (mythic origins) section of a text entitled *Unabridged Offerings to the Lha and Purification of the Lha of the Four Types of Little People*.[116] The pan-Tibetan clan lore found in these two works seems to reflect the formation of a national identity or consciousness. At the least, these collective genealogical myths of origin indicate the development of a far-ranging interrelated social and cultural framework in old Tibet. It is my view that a common ancestral identity based on a shared mythos as promoted in these texts, probably developed in the Imperial period when the entire Tibetan plateau was welded together in a single empire. I am inclined to see such myths as having been used to facilitate the cultural and ethnic unification of Imperial Tibet and the concomitant creation of a single polity.

Unabridged Offerings to the Lha and Purification of the Lha of the Four Types of Little People features rites of purification for humans and their personal deities known as *sel*. The *sel* is performed to restore the balance between individuals and the deities, which has been upset by the contaminating influence of impure actions such as *sme/dme* (murder of relatives), *mnol* (defilement resulting from environmental contamination) and *nal* (incest) (cf. Norbu 1995: 106; Karmay and

[116] *Mi'u rigs bzhi lha sel lha mchod rgyas pa*, folios 1b, ln. 1 to 4a, ln. 5. A photographic reproduction of this manuscript of 23 folios is found in Karmay and Nagano 2002. No author or finder is recorded in the text.

Nagano 2002: x).[117] The Bon *sel* is very important because it appears to furnish the historical precedent for the equilibrating rituals with a reviviscent function conducted by contemporary religious practitioners such as the spirit-mediums.

The entirely indigenous *Unabridged Offerings to the Lha and Purification of the Lha of the Four Types of Little People* contains archaic lore and practices that according to Bon tradition, originated in the pre-Imperial period. After providing the myth of origins, the text outlines the liturgical structure of the *sel* ritual, which includes confession, invitation of the deities and requests for protection. This outline is followed by the story of the *bon-gshen* (priests) who wear *ber-chen* (long robes), tie white turbans on their heads and drink a type of nectar called *A-ti*. These priests purified the deities by the smoke of white incense. The ritualists then invite the deities by *gtor-ma*, incense, a white flag, an arrow with white vulture feathers, and nine types of cloth. Among the deities invited are the *pho-lha, mo-lha* and *bu-rdzi* (babysitter), who are asked to manifest as seven golden birds on top of castles of gold, silver, turquoise, conch and agate. They are specifically requested to bestow children in the lap, livestock outside, the capability to have children (*sri*) deep inside the house, and wealth in the hand. The deities are purified with incense before offerings of beer, *'brang-rgyas* and *bshod* (kinds of *gtor-ma*), libations, jewels and grain are made to them. By waving flags, blowing conches, beating drums, and burning incense deities such as the *pho-lha, mo-lha, dgra-lha, srog-lha, zhang-lha*, and *yul-lha* are invited from their various castles. These divinities are offered the thrones of the crow, tiger, white female vulture, white female lion, elephant, and a camel with a white mouth, all of which have seats of conch.

The next series of offerings mentioned in the text are thirteen divine arrows, which have new feathers and cloths, unbroken bamboo shafts and points that are not rusted. These arrows function as the *rten* (support) for the *lha* and *dgra-lha*. Thirteen other articles are also installed as the *rten* including the following livestock: a light orange horse, divine white yak and red-faced divine sheep with vermilion swastika. A number of cosmopolitan beverages such as the grape [wine] of Mon, Chinese tea and beer, Mongolian beer, nectar of Iran, rice beer of Kashmir, *g.yu 'brang* (beer) of Zhang-zhung, and barley beer of Tibet (as well as a crystal sheep with conch horns) are given to the gods, who protect the various parts of the body. The text prescribes that the *sel* ritual is made in the first month of all four seasons.

[117] An excellent review of the various *sel* rites is found in Norbu 1995, pp. 103–107.

Offerings are then presented to the nine generations of *gnam gyi lha* (sky gods) brothers, four *bar gyi lha* (gods of the intermediate zone) and the 360 *sa-lha* (earth gods), as well as mountain deities such as Ti-se in the middle of the world and mTsho-ma-pham; Pom-ra, the *gnyan* of existence; rTsang-lha pu-dar of Las-stod; Yar-lha sham-po of the center; and gNyan-chen thang-lha. Other deities who are the recipient of offerings include *thab-lha* (god of the hearth), *zhing gi 'bras-lo-lha* (god of the grain crop), *mkhar gyi rtse-lha* (god of the peak of the castle), *khyim-lha* (household god), *sgo'i lha* (god of the door), *ra'i phyug-lha* (god of the corral), and *nang-lha* (home god). The text concludes with the summoning of *g.yang* (capability for good fortune), and aspirations for the long life of the ritualists and their benefactors.

Unabridged Offerings to the Lha and Purification of the Lha of the Four Types of Little People is prefaced in the usual fashion with prostrations to the deities, as well as to the *gshen* (perfected practitioners) and the *bon* (sacred utterances) of the Bon religion (para i). The text also reminds the ritualists of the essential value of the performance (para i). The actual *cho-rabs* begins with a description of a primal god who had a *lha* in the form of a vulture (*bya-rgod*) ornamented with a divine arrow (*lha-mda'*), divine barley (*lha-nas*) and a divine stone (*lha-rdo*) (para ii). Upon descending to earth this vulture and its accoutrements were installed as the first divine altar or ritual foundation (*lha-gzhi*) (paras ii, iii). The text then skips to the four proto-clans and the protective deities they received as their divine allotment (*lha-skal*) (para iv). Next the text divides the four proto-clan lineages into eight individual clans, and also notes that there are three orders of birds and thirteen countries (para v).

Od-de gung-rgyal and his consort sMan-dag btsun-mo give birth to five types of eggs, which each produce a different species of bird (paras vi, vii). These birds act as emissaries between humans and their clan deities (para viii). In order to carry out their mission a deity named Lha-btsun lag-skos gave the five birds juniper, yak tails and deer legs as ritual objects, in addition to white sheep with conch horns to ride on (para viii). With the prerequisites for the worship of the clan gods in place, the *cho-rabs* concludes with a brief description

of the first ritual (para ix). It features the use of the *mda' dar*, *me-long* and purifying incense, which are still the primary constituents of rituals for the personal deities as carried out by religious practioners such as the spirit-mediums. Like the ancient ritual of lustration, pure children are recorded as participating in it:[118]

(i) Prostrations to the three, *lha*, *gshen* and *bon*. The instructions of the divine *dpon-gsas*.[119] The pronouncements of the gods of good fortune and welfare. The *bon* of the swastika of existence. This text is not to be used by all those of base intellect. This text is among the five great Bon portals.[120] It is the pure *ga*[121] Bon portal of the *lha*. Without it it is very difficult to purify the gods. [It would be like] the blind leading the blind. Therefore it is essential to cherish it.

(ii) In the very ancient beginnings, in the country of the *lha* Yul gung-thang (Firmament Country), at the divine castle of Zo-brang, there was the holy man lord of existence gSal-dbang (Resplendent Power). The wife and mate he found was sMos-btsun gsal-mdzes (Eloquent Speech Resplendent Beauty). He had every sort of possession. He had a pleasing white *lha*. He had a divine arrow with a white feather. He had divine white barley. He had a mount ornamented with gold. The divine white stone was on the vulture's head. The divine arrow was on the vulture's tail. Its belly adhered to the divine altar. The divine barley was on the vulture's neck. It came down from the sky as the *lha*. When it came down to earth it acted on behalf of living beings.

(iii) On top of the pleasing and beautiful divine altar, the divine stone was kept on the vulture's head so originated the white head of the vulture. The divine arrow was erected on the tail of the vulture so originated its blue tail. The divine altar was kept underneath the vulture so originated the felt-carpeted divine altar. That is why the belly of the vulture is white. The divine barley was discovered from the vulture's *gre* (neck pouch) so originated the existence of the neck pouch hoard in the birds. Divine blue barley was spread out on the white felt-carpeted divine altar. The divine arrow with the white feather was erected.

[118] See tale of Khong-ra, Part Five, section vi, pp. 450, 451.
[119] The prototypical Bon master.
[120] This is reference to the *sgo-bzhi mdzod-lnga* (four portals and the fifth, the treasury), a system of the classification of the Bon teachings. They include *chab-dkar* (white waters), *chab-nag* (black waters), *'phan-yul*, *dpon-gsas* (masters), and *mdzod* (treasury). For a general description see Norbu 1995, pp. 37, 38.
[121] *Ga* may designate a portion of the Bon teachings.

(iv) There exist four types of little people.[122] For their divine share, the sMra zhang-zhung obtained gNam-lha dkar-po, Shel-rgyung dkar-po[123] and dMu-sa wer-chen. For their divine share, the sTong sum-pa obtained gNam-gsas dkar-po and the dKar-po mched-brgyad (Eight White Brothers). For their divine share, lDong me-nyag obtained Se-lha-mchog and sGo-lha stag-g.yag (Portal Lha Tiger Yak). For their divine share, the Se 'a-zha obtained Thog-thog lcam-dral. These were the four types of little people humans. There were [also] three types of birds.

(v) sMrar[124] and Zhang-zhung were two. lDong and Me-nyag were two. sTong and Sum-pa were two. Se and 'a-zha were two. These were the five [with] Zhang-po sgo (Maternal Uncle Portal). The types of birds are all the carnivorous ones with hooked and rounded beaks, all the bottom feeding types with flat bills and all the plant eating types with big bulbous beaks. Eleven countries, twelve countries and with U-ste ngam-pa there were thirteen.

(vi) The name of the father and patriarch was 'Od-de gung-rgyal. The name of the mother and matriarch was sMan-dag btsun-mo. The sons of the union of these two arose from five eggs.[125] These five were: the purplish brown agate egg, the white conch egg, the blue turquoise egg, the red copper egg, and the black iron egg.

(vii) From inside the opened [agate] egg [appeared] sGam pha-bang yer-zur with the wings that are not a bird's nor a hatchlings, and extremely sharp *gnam-lcags* (celestial iron) claws and beak.[126] From inside the conch egg [appeared] the crane. From inside the turquoise egg [appeared] the cuckoo. From inside the copper egg [appeared] the parrot. From inside the iron egg [appeared] the lark.

(viii) Lha-btsun lag-skos said, "You wonderful five birds be the messengers between the *lha* and people. Invite the gods to the people." Thus he spoke. From over yonder the parrot replied, "If you want us to go and invite the *lha*, please arrange mounts for us." He said, "For this we request a sign and an award object."[127] gTsug gi skos-rgyal said, "On top of the mountain gTsug-drag sde-pa there is a juniper

[122] *Mi'u* (little people/little person) is an epithet for the Tibetans.
[123] This is the well-known mountain god located on the border of Sa-dga' and 'Brong-pa counties, who is still an important clan and family protector in Upper Tibet. See Bellezza 2001, p. 43 (fn. 10).
[124] Spelling as in the text.
[125] For more lore about generative eggs see Part Three, section ix, pp. 325–328.
[126] This 'bird' is actually a bat.
[127] *Jal*. Evidently, objects used for signaling and inviting the *lha*.

and yak tail as long as one span. At the base are white sheep with horns of conch. You ride on these. For the sign there is the lower leg of a wild deer. Take the tail of a white yak and the tail of a black yak." The bat and lark went above U-ri-btsug. When they looked around it was exactly as he said. Quickly, they rode the five [sheep] with the conch horns. They ran like deer. They soared like vultures above the thirteen layers of the sky.

(ix) In the right [hand] they carried arrows festooned with five different [colored] cloths. In the left [hand] they carried *me-long*. They purified by the smoke of the five types of incense. Two pristine children were decorated with beautiful ornaments. Their hands and faces were thoroughly cleaned. They waved the white *mda' dar*. The *sku-gshen* melodiously proclaimed the *bon* (sacred speech).

Transliteration of Mi'u rigs bzhi lha sel lha mchod *excerpt*

(i) lha gshen bon dang gsum la phyag 'tshal lo / dpon gsas lha'i lung / phywa dpal gsas kyi bka' / g.yung drung srid pa'i bon / blo dman kun gyi spyod yul min / 'di ni bon sgo chen po lnga yi nang nas / gtsang ma lha'i bon sgo ga sde yin / 'di med lha sel 'o re rgyal (= brgyal) / long bas long ba khrid pa yin / des na 'di la gces par zab /

(ii) gna' snga thams cad kyi dang po la / yul ni lha yul gung thang na / lha mkhar zo brang na / rje srid pa'i mi po gsal dbang lags / khab dang dbyal btsal ba'i / smos btsun gsal mdzes lags / dkor du ci yang mnga' / dga' lha dkar po mnga' / lha mda' sgro dkar mnga' / lha nas dkar mo mnga' / gser gyi pud de zhon pa gcig / lha rdo bya rgod mgo na yod / lha mda' bya rgod 'jug (= mjug) na yod / lha gzhi bya rgod rbo la sbyar / lha nas bya rgod 'gul (= mgul) na yod / gnam nas lhar gshegs / sa la byon dus 'gro don mdzad /

(iii) lha gzhi yid 'ong mdzes steng du / lha rdo bya rgod mgo na bzhag / bya rgod spyi bo dkar ba byung / lha mda' bya rgod mjug na btsugs / 'jug (= mjug) ma sngo ba de nas byung / lha gzhi bya rgod rbo na bzhag / lha gzhi phying bting de nas byung / bya rgod rbo dkar de ltar yin / lha nas bya rgod gre nas bton / bya la gre bsog yod pa de nas byung / lha gzhi phying dkar bting / lha nas sngo mo bkram / lha mda' sgro dkar btsugs /

(iv) mi'u rigs bzhi srid / smra zhang zhung gi lha skal du / gnam

lha dkar po dang / shel rgyung dkar po dang / dmu sa wer chen thob / stong sum pa'i lha skal du / gnam gsas dkar po dang / dkar po mched brgyad thob / ldong me nyag gi lha skal du / se lha mchog dang / sgo lha stag g.yag thob / se 'a zha'i lha skal du / thog thog lcam dral thob / mi la mi'u rigs bzhi srid / bya la bya'u rigs gsum srid /

(v) smrar dang zhang zhung gnyis / ldong dang me nyag gnyis / stong dang gsum (= sum) pa gnyis / se dang 'a zha gnyis / zhang po sgo dang lnga ru byung / bya rigs ni / sha zan thams cad mchu zlum khug / 'dam zan thams cad mchu leb rigs / sgum thun thams cad mchu hril rigs / yul bcu gcig bcu gnyis na / U ste ngam pa de dang bcu gsum lags /

(vi) pha dang yab kyi mtshan / 'od de gung rgyal lags / ma dang yum gi (= gyi) mtshan / sman dag btsun mo lags / de gnyis bshos pa'i sras / sgong nga (= lnga) ru srid / mchong sgong smug po dang / dung sgong dkar po dang / g.yu sgong sngon po dang / zang (= zangs) sgong dmar po dang / lcags sgong nag po de dang lnga ru byung /

(vii) mchong sgong rdol ba'i nang shed na / bya ma byi'i 'dab gshog can / gnam lcags dbal gyi mchu sder can / sgam pha bang yer zur lags / dung sgong nang nas khrung khrung byung / g.yu sgong nang nas khu byug byung / zang (= zangs) sgong nang nas ne tso byung / lcags sgong nang nas co ga byung /

(viii) lha btsun lag skos gyi (= kyis) zhal na re / khyed ya mtshan can gyi bya lnga yis / lha dang mi'i 'phrin pa gyis / mi ru lha rnams spyan 'dren mdzod / de skad gsungs pa dang / pha gi nas ne tsos lan smras ba (= pa) / lha spyan 'dren byed par 'gro dgos na / bdag cag rnams la rta re 'tshal / 'di don rtags dang 'jal gcig zhu zer / gtsug gi skos rgyal zhal na re / ri gtsug drag sde pa'i kha shed na / shug pa g.yag rnga 'dom tsam dang / de'i rtsa bar lug dkar po dung gi ra can yod / de la zhon / rtags su sha god (= rgod) a rje ngar lhu gcig dang / g.yag rnga dkar nag khyer la song / pha bang co gas U ri btsug (= gtsug) gi mkha' la byon / ltas te gzigs tsam na / de bzhin du nges par 'dug / dung gi ra can lnga la ling gis zhon / sha ltar 'grogs te thal / rgod ltar lding ste thal / gnam rim pa bcu gsum steng du byon /

(ix) mda' dar sna lnga g.yas su khyer / g.yon du me long khyer / spos lnga dud pas bsang / khye'u gtsang ma gnyis / mdzes pa'i chas gyis (= kyis) rgyan (= brgyan) / lag byad dag par khrus / mda' dar dkar po g.yab / sku gshen gyer dbyangs bon 'di gsungs /

Supplement for Khong-khyim zhal-dkar (Hur-pa) (From para ix and fn. 72 of *'Dzam gling spyi bsang*)

Hur-pa, with his gNyan-chen thang-lha mountain range abode, is one of many Bon protective deities whose residence is Upper Tibet. One text of a Bon *bka' skyong* (protectors of the doctrine) collection is a *bskul-pa* (a ritual work that invokes and then deputes deities for various tasks) entitled *Dra ba dmar po btsan rgod hur pa gri gzer gyi 'phrin las,* which contains an account of the terrific Hur-pa. No author or discoverer is mentioned,[128] and the content of the text offers few clues as to the antiquity or geographic orientation of Hur-pa. This work is composed in a style analogous to that used for the higher protectors of Buddhism, in which there is a preoccupation with the defense of religious doctrines.

The tone of language in this Hur-pa text is strident and highly aggressive. This *btsan* is portrayed as a merciless killer, disposing of all those who oppose the Bon doctrine. In the text the terrible wrath of the deity is directed against apostates. Hur-pa has an awesome appearance and a huge army of acolytes who do his bidding. With his turban, armor, tiger-skin quiver and leopard-skin bow case (para ii) his guise is that of the traditional warrior of Tibet, prevalent since ancient times. Other salient features of native lore in the text include Hur-pa's display of the *dbal-dar* banner and ancient war cries (paras ii–iv). Conversely, a religious feature such as the *lha-srin sde-brgyad* classification of spirits (para v) is adopted from Buddhist tradition. While apparently not a possessing deity of the *lha-pa* of Upper Tibet, the language used to describe Hur-pa's *btsan* persona and violent activities are reminiscent of that used in exorcisms, where evil spirits are dispatched. Except for a few closing mantras, the text in its entirety reads:

[128] Nos. 608–612 of a manuscript volume containing general instructions for conducting rituals, entitled *Nyer mkho 'dod 'jo 'khri shing.* The chapter under consideration begins with *yi-dam* (tutelary deities), then the higher protectors and finally Hur-pa.

(i) *bSwo!* In the language of Zhang-zhung smar: *rgya-wer, sad-wer, ne-wer-re.* In the language of sPu-rgyal's Tibet: King of the *btsan*, assembler of the divine army. Your secret name is Hur-pa, he who slaughters swiftly and decisively. You are the obedient one of the Bon *gshen-rab.*[129] You are the king that embraces all four continents. You can sever the life-force of all living beings. Your body is of a jeweled bright blazing hue. Your manner is that of an imposing, magnificent lion.

(ii) On your body you wear red striped brocade. On your feet you wear dynamic boots, and are clad in armor. On your head is tied a salutary red cloth turban. Around your waist is a tiger [skin] quiver and leopard [skin] bow case. In your right hand you hold a *dbal-dar ru-mtshon* (powerful regimental banner). Strike the enemy with sudden violent death! The blazing fire from your eyes engulfs the three worlds. The tornado from your nose shakes the three worlds. You rip out the dark red heart of the adversary with your bared teeth. The blood vomited from your mouth is a falling, killing rain.

(iii) You call and depute your *btsan* army by *ya-sgra* and *cha-sgra.*[130] You spread sorcery manifestations against the enemy. You ride a blue horse with black underparts. Your hair is a swirling blizzard of weapons. You move instantaneously on wings of wind. You circle the world in a single moment. You slaughter the enemies of the Bon Doctrine. When Hur-pa turns towards the enemy your one hundred thousand ravenous flesh-eaters [consume] their life-force. Strike the enemy with sudden violent death.

(iv) When you raise the *dbal-dar ru-mtshon* your many *btsan* hordes are mobilized. Army of *btsan* go to the enemy! Strike the enemy with the devastating illness of *glang-thabs.*[131] Sometimes you manifest as Hur-pa, he who slaughters swiftly and decisively, the murderer of enemies. You display one hundred thousand types of terrific sorcery. You disperse the four mDa' rab gong (Best Arrow Superiors). You initiate the activities of the Five Rol-po horsemen. You send the single *ya-ba*[132] horseman to capture. You effect the activities of the four Hur-pa members. You disburse the life-cutting butchers to butcher.

[129] *gShen-rab* refers either to the founder of the Bon religion gShen-rab mi-bo-che, or to the Bon *gshen* practitioners in general. If the latter meaning is intended the modern spelling for *rab* is *rabs* (lineage).

[130] These are supposed to be battle cries used in ancient times.

[131] A potentially fatal disease of the bowels.

[132] The Ya-ba skya-bdun are noted in various sources as both an enemy of Gesar and gShen-rab, while the *btsan* Ya-ba rkya-cig is mentioned in *Khro.* See Martin 2001, p. 188 (fn. 11).

(v) You make the *lha-srin sde-brgyad*[133] quake and tremble. You brandish the *se-long*[134] of the right hand. You bind the enemies by the *dril-zhags*[135] in the left hand. You strive in [killing] activities and slaughter enemies. Your many-armed ones cut the life-force of the enemy. The army of *bdud* and *btsan* workers instantaneously slaughter the oath-breaking enemies. You confront the enemy with fiercely mannered manifestations. Strike the enemy with violent death and devastating intestinal illness! Pour out on the ground the red blood and white [matter] of their brains. Drink the red blood of their hearts. Strike the enemy with piercing pain [like] an arrow of the *btsan*.

Transliteration of the Dra ba dmar po btsan rgod Hur pa gri gzer gyi 'phrin las *text*

(i) bswo zhang zhung smar gyi skad du na / rgya wer sad wer ne wer re / spu rgyal bod gyi (= kyi) skad du na / btsan gyi rgyal po lha dmag bdud (= bsdus) / gsang mtshan hur pa gsod skyin (= skyen) yin / gshen rab bon gyi bka' nyan pa / gling bzhi kun khyab rgyal po bya / skye 'gro kun gyi srog gcod pa / sku mdog rin chen me 'od 'bar / gzi byin seng ge 'gying ba'i tshul /

(ii) sku la za 'og dmar khra gsol / zhabs la dbang lham go khrab gsol / dbu la le rgan (=brgan) 'dzum thod bcings / stag ras (= ral) gzig shub rked la bskor / phyag g.yas dbal dar ru mtshon bsnams / dgra la dri (= gri) nad hur thum thongs / spyan nas me 'bar stong gsum bsreg / shangs nas rlung 'tshub stong gsum g.yo / tshims (= tshems) gtsig dran (= gran) snying dmar nag 'byin / zhal nas khrag skyug gri char 'bebs /

(iii) ya sgra cha sgras btsan dmag sbran / sprul pa'i cho 'phrul dgra la 'gyed / chibs su sngon po 'gab nag bcibs / spu ni mtshon cha'i bu yug 'tshubs / rlung gi gshog pas yud kyi (= kyis) bskyod / thang cig yud la 'jig rten 'khor / bstan pa bod (= bon) gyi dgra bo bsgral / hur pa dgra la chas pa'i tshe / srog la rngam pa'i sha zan 'bum / dgra la gri thabs hur tham thongs /

[133] A common listing of eight types of Indian and indigenous spirits including members such as: *lha, klu, gnod-sbyin, dri-za, lha-ma-yin, mi'am-ci, mkha' lding, lto-phye,* etc.
[134] This is probably the Zhang-zhung word for *sdig 'dzub*, a wrathful hand-sign made by extending the index and little finger and pressing the the two middle fingers against the palm with the thumb.
[135] *Dril-zhags* denotes either a lasso with a bell attached, or the snaring action of the lasso.

(iv) dbal dar ru mtshon phyar tsam na / btsan khams mang po 'dun ma 'du / btsan gyi dmag dpung dgra la ya / gri gzer glang thabs dgra la thongs / lan re sprul pa mdzad tsam na / hur pa gsod skyen dgra bo'i gshed / 'jigs pa'i cho 'phrul 'bum tshogs ston / mda' rab gong bzhi pho nyar 'gyed / rol po rkya lnga las la 'jug / ya ba rkya gcig bzung ba (= bar) thongs / hur pa sde bzhi las la 'jud / srog gcod shan pa bsha' la 'gyed /

(v) lha srin sde brgyad g.yo zhing 'khrugs / g.yas kyi se long dgra la 'gyed / g.yon gyis dril zhags dgra bo bcings / dgra bo gsod pa'i las la brtson / mtshon thogs mang pos dgra srog gcod / bdud dmag btsan gyi las byed rnams / dgra bo dam nyams yud la gsod / sprul pa'i 'tshams rngam dgra la byed / gri thabs rgyu gzer dgra la thongs / glad (= klad) khrag dkar dmar thang la phob (= phos) / snying khrag dmar po kha ru drongs / btsan gyi gzer mda' dgra la rgyob /

ii) *rKyang-khra*

A deity often considered one of the sons of gNyan-chen thang-lha is rDo-rje rkyang-khra, a popular possessing figure of the *lha-pa*. Also referred to simply as rKyang-khra (Variegated-Colored Onager), his residence is widely recognized as a small hill in the midst of a large plain north of dPa' mtsho, in gNam-ru (dPal-mgon county). The only text dedicated solely to rKyang-khra appears to be the one attributed to the great 'Bri-gung-pa hierarch sKyob-pa 'jig-rten mgon-po (1143–1217), entitled *rKyang khra gsol kha.*[136] The manuscript available to me came from the great spirit-medium of gNam-ru, Pho-bo lha-dbang (see Part Two, section xi). It was passed down from his father.

rKyang khra gsol kha conforms with the standard formula of invocatory texts for indigenous deities: apology, offerings, and requests. It belongs to the Buddhist stylistic phase of ritual literature, in which rKyang-khra is shorn of his geographic underpinnings. This illustrates that this thoroughly Buddhacized genre of literature was already

[136] This three-folio handwritten text contains a number of common spelling errors because it has been copied again and again. Spelling corrections are made in the transliteration of the text below, without notation. The name of the author is found at the very end of the text. According to Pho-bo lha-dbang, there is supposed to be a longer version of the *rKyang khra gsol kha* but it was not available for study.

established by the 13th century. As such, the sectarian orientation of this text contrasts with the many Bon works in this study. *rKyang khra gsol kha* contains little archaic lore or verses of indigenous poetry. It does however, make ample reference to the Buddhist worldview and practice. The text features an apology to rKyang-khra and his circle of deities and other spirits, worded in a way commonly directed to higher Buddhist gods (para i). The offering ensemble is of the type traditionally given to the class of more powerful Buddhist protectors (para ii). While meat is offered to the deity, it is in the form of a cooked meal, not raw. Among the many wild animals presented to the deity is an onager with a white muzzle (para iii). Although it is not noted in the text, this type of animal is the customary mount of rKyang-khra. rKyang-khra is the most famous deity in Upper Tibet associated with the endemic onager. Given the lore generally prevailing in Upper Tibet, it seems likely that he sometimes appeared in the form of this animal. The indigenous religious position of the onager may have been related to regional clan origins, as possibly suggested by its solitary depiction in the rock art of Upper Tibet.

In standard Buddhist liturgical practice, offerings are first made to the Buddhas before they are given to lesser protectors (para iii). In this case, the primordial Buddha is invoked. In a clear parallel, the liturgies of the spirit-mediums also call upon and offer gifts to the Buddhas as a prelude to the invocation of the deities of the trance. An essential part of the *gsol-kha* literary genre are the requests for worldly success and protection (para iv), which are traditionally dispensed by the environment-based pantheon. Quite typically, the ritualists ask to be free from misfortune, epidemics and poverty (paras iv, v) These requests reflect the powers ascribed to rKyang-khra in spirit-mediumship. The text ends with the traditional invocation to the mountain spirits used by all Tibetans:

> (i) *Kyai!* Brave *btsan* rKyang-khra you and your consort, sons, your manifestations and outer manifestations,[137] obedient servants, and particularly, the *lha, klu, gnyan*, queen *mtsho-sman, dmu, btsan* and their circles, protectors of the north, be mindful of us. We apologize for the spoiling of the offerings and [ritual] constituents by the effect of our ignorance. We apologize in the true nature of mind, the domain of

[137] *Yang-sprul* can refer to both deities in rKyang-khra's outer circle, or secondary manifestations (manifestations of his manifestations).

> emptiness, for mistakes in meditation leading to faulty appearances, and insufficient or excessive [visualizations and oath components], which are like the illusory play of dreams. I heartily confess whatever provocations and broken pledges we have perpetrated against the *yul-lha, gzhi-bdag* and their circles by the commission of offenses through deceptive ignorance. Please take it in stride.
>
> (ii) *Kyai!* In the extremely broad vessels of paradise we arrange the splendid offerings of *gtor-ma* and *tshogs*, and spread around the not incomplete offerings of gods and men. We burn in an enveloping cloud of smoke sandalwood, dairy foods, sweets, *A-ka-ru*,[138] *spos-dkar, ru-ta*,[139] and *sā ha-la*,[140] a delicious-smelling prepared stew, and other foods. We offer the first portion of consecrated essence of grain *dza-gad* (beer) compounded with medicines and mercurial drugs, *phye-mar* (butter and barley meal preparation), and red and white types of cloth. We sprinkle good libations of *chang* (beer) [in amounts] like a river current. We set out saffron, twelve fragrances,[141] (6), flowers, the assembly of standard offerings, the eight auspicious symbols, the seven symbols of royal sovereignty, and the inconceivably extensive four worlds.[142]
>
> (iii) [We offer] a beautiful *rkyang* with jeweled ornaments and a white mouth, excellent horses, wild yaks, tigers, leopards, black bears, peacocks, parrots, cranes, and others, and many flying and roving animals.[143] We offer these not incomplete outer, inner and secret *rten-rdzas* (support components) to the miraculous manifestations of Kun-tu bzang-po (All Good), the Buddha enjoyers.
>
> (iv) *Kyai!* From the unborn natural state, the son emanation of the Great God of Existence[144] promised to protect the virtuous realm. We praise you by the melodious sounds of musical instruments. Propagate without decay, through the eons, the virtuous doctrine of the Kun-mkhyen (Omniscient One), the source of the ocean of all good things,

[138] *Aquilaria*, which is of three types: white, black and red. Medicinally it is used to treat rheumatic fever, general weakness, etc. (*'Khrung dpe dri med*: 164–166).

[139] A herb that grows in Khams. Used in coughs, chills, gastric disturbances, etc. (*'Khrung dpe dri med*: 290–291). The black variety grows in the Himalaya and western Tibet (Pasang Yonten Arya 1998: 246).

[140] Probably an *Aconitum*.

[141] The signification of the word *bag* in conjunction with *dri* (fragrance) is unclear.

[142] *Gling-bzhi*. This appears to be reference to a *mdos* offering, temporary abodes of deities in the form of the cosmos.

[143] The word *srog-chags* is employed here and denotes both domestic and wild animals.

[144] Srid-pa'i lha-chen. This is most probably an appellation for gNyan-chen thang-lha. A survey of ritual literature indicates that the title *srid-pa'i lha-chen* was adopted with much enthusiasm by the Buddhists. According to Bon tradition, it was also used in the pre-Imperial period to describe powerful deities.

the auspiciousness of the three worldly realms (*'jig-rten khams-gsum*). Eliminate misfortune and evil occurrences affecting the knowledge-holder yogi adepts, the sponsors, their circles [of friends and relatives] and their property, and the circle [of followers and their property]. May there not even be a hint of degeneration of all existence and our locale through disease, epidemics, quarrels, and destitution.

(v) [Grant] us the decisive attainment of the glorious *sde-bzhi*[145] and good standing. Be allied to us without distraction. In your all-embracing justice, god please accept our apologies for having agitated your mind through the perpetration of activities that have come under the influence of impiety,[146] the interruption of offerings, and excessive or insufficient rituals. Three root gods[147] rain down blessings and the capability for attainment, and remove all obstructions. May the rain of auspicious *man-dha-ra* [flowers] fall at every place and at every time. *Ki ki bso bso*, the gods are victorious![148]

Transliteration of rKyang khra gsol kha *text*

(i) Kyai btsan rgod rkyang khra yab yum sras dang bas / sprul pa yang sprul bka' nyan mngag bzhug bcas / khyad par byang phyogs skyong pa'i lha klu dang / gnyan dang mtsho sman rgyal mo dmu btsan dang / 'khor dang bcas pa bdag la dgongs su gsol / ma rig dbang gis mchod rdzas nyams shing bshags / ting 'dzin mi lhag ched lhag nongs pa kun / rmi lam sgyu ma'i rol pa ji bzhin du / rang bzhin ngang nas stong pa'i dbyings su bshag / ma rig 'khrul pa'i nyes pa spyad pa yis / yul lha gzhi bdag 'khor dang bcas pa la / phog thug nyam chags gyur pa ci mchis pa / snying nas bshag cing bzod pa mdzod du gsol /

(ii) kyai zhing khams rnam dag snod yangs por / gtor tshogs dpal gyi mchod pa bshams / lha dang mi yi mchod pa nas / ma tshang med pa'i spyan gzig bkrams / tsan dan dkar dmar A ka ru spos dkar ru ta sā ha la / thug pa la sogs dri zhim byas / bsreg pa'i dud pa sprin du 'khrigs / 'bru bcud snying po rdza gad sman / ra

[145] The four conducive conditions for human life: 1) *chos* (religion), *nor* (wealth), *'dod-pa* (fulfillment of desires), and *thar-pa* (liberation).

[146] The word *bag-med* (impiety) can also be defined as inattentiveness, unruliness, foolhardiness, and carelessness.

[147] *rTsa-gsum lha*: the *bla-ma* of empowerments, the *yi-dam* of blessings and the *mkha' 'gro* of attainments.

[148] This is the standard exclamation for the veneration of mountain spirits, which according to Bon tradition, originated in the pre-Imperial period.

sa ya na yag sbyar pa'i phud / phye mar dar sna dkar dmar gyi / skyems bzang chang chu rgyun bzhin bsgrengs / gur gum dri bag bcu gnyis dang / me tog la sogs nyer spyod tshogs / bkra shis rtags brgyad rgyal srid bdun / rab 'byams gling bzhi bkod pa las /

(iii) rin chen rgyan mdzes kha dkar rkyang / rta mchog 'brong g.yag stag gzig dom / rma bya ne tso khrung khrung sogs / rnam mang srog chags 'phur lding 'phyo / phyi nang gsang ba 'di kho ni / rten rdzas ma tshangs med pa ni / kun tu bzang po'i sgyu 'phrul gyis / rnam par rol pa'i sangs rgyas mchod /

(iv) kyai skye ba med pa'i rang bzhin las / srid pa'i lha chen sprul pa'i sras / dkar phyogs skyongs bar zhal bzhes pa'i / dbyangs snyan rol mo bcas pas bstod / 'jig rten khams gsum bkra shis pa'i dge mtshan rgya mtsho 'byung pa po / kun mkhyen rgyal ba'i bstan pa la / mi nub bskal par rgyas par mdzod / grub pa'i rnal 'byor rig pa 'dzin / rgyu sbyor mi nor 'khor bcas gyi / mi mthun rkyen ngan rab zhi zhing / bde bskyid phun sum tshogs par shog / 'jig rten srid dang yul phyogs 'dir / nad yam 'khrug rtsod dbul phong kyi / rgud pa'i ming yang mi grag cing /

(v) sde bzhi dpal gyi mngon thob pa'i / sdong grogs g.yel ba med par mdzod / cho ga lhag ched mchod pa nyams / bag med dbang gis bgyis pa'i las / lha khyod thugs dang 'gal bgyis ba / mnyam nyid klong du bzod par bzhes / byin rlabs dngos grub char babs shing / bar chad kun sel rtsa gsum lha / bkra shis man dha ra yi char / phyogs dus kun tu 'bab par shog / ki ki bso bso lha rgyal lo /

iii) *rTa-rgo*

The deity rTa-rgo,[149] in his various white and red forms, is synonymous with the well-known meridian mountain range, located immediately south of Dang-ra g.yu mtsho. In his white form, as the leader of the brotherhood and circle rTa-rgo deities, rTa-rgo is one of the patron gods of the spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet. Moreover,

[149] The standard spelling for rTa-rgo found in most texts is rTa-sgo. I have consistently used this alternate spelling except in translation, because it is believed to reflect Zhang-zhung orthography as well as more accurately replicating the prevailing pronunciation.

two *btsan* members of the brotherhood, Ngo-dmar lha-btsan and Gangs-lung lha-btsan, are important possessing deities of the *lha-pa*. In general, the rTa-rgo deities are fierce and proud warriors, with the ability to eliminate disease-causing spirits and misfortune of every kind. These basic functions are of course exploited by the *lha-pa* during their embodiment of the rTa-rgo deities. For translation, texts belonging to a Bon collection popularly called *rTa dang tshogs bskang* (*Offerings for the Fulfillment of rTa-rgo and Dang-ra*) are featured. This collection was compiled from manuscripts surviving the Chinese Cultural Revolution and printed under the direction of Phyug-tsho monastery, located on the east side of Dang-ra g.yu-mtsho. I have already discussed both of these texts, as well as others in the *rTa dang tshogs bskang* collection (see Bellezza 1997).

An important text for rTa-rgo in terms of the wealth of indigenous lore and the manner in which he is to be invoked and appeased is entitled *Offerings for the Fulfillment of the Great God rTa-sgo.* It was written at rDzu 'phrul phug, a place of pilgrimage at rTa-rgo that was used by the *lha-pa*.[150] This text is part of a common genre (*mchod-bskang*) of literature written to satisfy the *yul-lha* in order that they might be positively disposed to those residing under their territorial control.

According to Bon tradition, the ritual traditions and deities honored in the *Lha chen rta sgo'i mchod bskang* have their origins in the pre-Imperial kingdom of Zhang-zhung. As discussed, however, such claims remain difficult to substantiate. Although the modes of performance are at variance (visualization and meditation as opposed to possession), the underlying purpose of this complex offering ritual, and that behind the simpler invocations of the *lha-pa*, is essentially the same. It can be summed up as follows: to befriend rTa-rgo and his circle of deities with gifts so that they will be inclined to materially aid those who have petitioned them. The kinds of objects offered to rTa-rgo reflect both his beneficial and destructive quali-

[150] *Lha chen rta sgo'i mchod bskang* (*rTa dang tshogs bskang* collection, published in Lhasa, nos. 167–188). The colophon reads: "In this way the offerings and invocations are done. It was written from visions that appeared to rTogs-ldan nam-mkha' blo-ldan (14th century?) at rDzu 'phrul phug. This combined *bskang* [*ba*] and *bzlog* [*pa*] (rites to appease and avert various kinds of harm) was presented to Khri-dpon lha-mo mgon." (*ces bya la mchod cing bskul lo / rtogs ldan nam mkha' blo ldan gyis / dben gnas rdzu 'phrul phug tu gzigs snang la byung nas mdzad pa'i / bskang bzlog dpugs* (= *spug*) *ma 'di / khri dpon lha mo mgon la gnang ba'o*).

ties, and represent the produce and products of the land. The verses are based on the regular occurrence of seven syllables. Lines of seven or nine syllables are the most common sequences in extant ritual literature for the mountain deities, and are also frequently represented in the Ge-sar epic. The text belongs to the intermediate stylistic phase of liturgical development. However, lamaist (Tibetan ecclesiastic) modification is minimal, and is only exhibited in some of the offering articles and the wording of certain passages.

The rTa-rgo gods and other deities of Tibet's native pantheon share their iconography and functions in common with the legendary Bon masters of primordial and Zhang-zhung times. They wear the same types of garments, possess the same resplendent bodies of various colors and hold the same attributes in their hands. Their fortune-bestowing and apotropaic activities are also similar. This comes as no surprise for these human and preternatural figures belong to the same corpus of Bon tradition. As we have already seen, in the indigenous cosmogonies, the Tibetans and their deities are genealogically related, providing a cultural model for the existence of manifold physical and functional parallels. In order to illustrate these common aspects of indigenous as well as Indian-inspired tantric tradition, in the next three paragraphs, I will furnish a survey of Bon masters drawn from the text *rGyud of the Illuminated Mind of the Knowledge Holders*,[151] comparing them with analogous features of the native deities.

The mother of the heavenly *gshen* 'Chi-med gtsug-phud,[152] bZang-za ring-btsun, held a golden *bum-pa* (vase) in her hand as do the rTa-rgo brothers and a variety of indigenous female deities. Her son wore a *stag-sham* (tiger-skin lower garment), tiger-skins also being a popular dress among the native deities and those of Indian descent. In his left hand he held the lasso of wisdom and in his right hand a golden wheel, as do some of the mountain deities. 'Chi-med gtsug-phud, like his consort Kun-snang gsal-ma, various other ancient Bon

[151] See *Rigs* (= *rig*) *'dzin rig pa'i thugs rgyud**, written by Dran-pa nam-mkha' and rediscovered by rMa-ston shes-rab sengge (*Sources for a History of Bon*, nos. 186–237), nos. 190, ln. 1 to 210, ln. 3.

* *rGyud* is a seminal textual source that serves as the basis of a Bon religious tradition.

[152] The previous incarnation of the Bon founder gShen-rab. Biographical details are found in Karmay 1972, pp. xx, xxi.

practitioners, certain deities, and many of the *lha-pa,* wore his hair in a *thor-gtsug* (wound on top of the head). His consort also had a *rgyal-mtshan* (victory banner), which in various forms, is a common attribute of deities as well. The legendary early tantric master gSang-ba 'dus-pa wielded a sword and bow, as do the rTa-rgo deities and many other *btsan* and *lha-ri.* His consort bSen thub-ma held *a thog-mda'* (thunderbolt arrow) and skullcap full of blood, attributes reminiscent of lake and tantric deities. This couple subdued the enemies of the Bon Doctrine and removed the life-force of the *bdud* and *dregs-pa* ('haughty ones'), functions also popularly carried out by the deities.

Another early *gshen,* Lha-bon yongs-su dag-pa, had a bright white color and bound a red turban on his head, just like the rTa-rgo gods and other native divinities. He and his consort 'Od 'phro-ma could fly in the sky like birds, an activity of the deities as well. The legendary *gshen* Mi-lus bsam-legs wore a turban and a red-striped *ber* (cloak), popular attire of the *btsan.* Klu-grub ye-shes snying-po and his consort lCam-rgyung ne-rog were attired in *chu-dar* (aquatic silk), a material likewise used by indigenous deities, both male and female. They subdued all the *klu* as do the mountain and lake spirits. Another legendary *gshen* couple sNang-ba mdog-can and Bar-snang lha-mo 'od-phro ma conquered all the savage *lha-srin* and controlled them like servants, a theme well represented in texts for the indigenous pantheon. A Zhang-zhung era master sPe-bon thog 'phrul is recorded as controlling the *bdud* and female deities such as the *mtsho-sman* just like the various gods. Moreover, the Zhang-zhung master Hris-pa gyer-med controlled the *lha-srin,* deputed the *mtsho-sman* and displayed many types of magical manifestations.

The consort of the *gshen* rNgam-pa lce-rings, Seng-gdong dkar-mo, wore a *la'u,* the *gshen* lDe-bon gyim-tsha rma-chung a *thul-pa,* and Hris-pa gyer-med a tiger-skin *slag-pa;* types of robes well represented among the native divinities. The ancient Bon practitioner Me-nyag lce-tsha mkhar-bu held an ax in his right hand, a weapon of choice for the *bdud.* He and his consort Klu-lcam 'bar-ma increased the capability for the attainment of wealth, a vital function of the indigenous pantheon. Similarly, with his left hand lDe-bon gyim-tsha rma-chung gave possessions to the *gshen* (*g.yon-pas longs-spyod gshen la 'gyed-pa*). Like the rTa-rgo gods, the Zhang-zhung saints dMu-tsha gyer-med and Ra-sangs khod-ram had tiger and leopard costumes, and held a drum and *gshang.* They also rode *ri-dwags* (wild ungulates) and flew like birds.

Lha chen rta sgo'i mchod bskang begins with a poetic description of the mountain rTa-rgo, with its references to the weather, the beautiful form of the mountain, and the wild animals it hosts (paras i, ii). This is followed by an enumeration of his parents and brotherhood (paras iii, iv). His origins are attributed to a male *lha* and a female *klu,* a cosmogonic theme of ancient times, but instead of simply mating, the deities are derived from a doctrinal principle closely associated with Vajrayana Buddhist tradition: the union of *thabs* (skillful means) and *shes-rab* (wisdom). The text proceeds to detail a large assembly of objects offered to rTa-rgo (paras v–x). While the *lha-pa* do not indulge in such elaborate offerings to the deities, we perhaps get some idea of what their ancient altars might have looked like. According to popular Tibetan tradition, the *lha-pa* were once mighty practitioners, with many resources at their disposal. The drum and *gshang* are among the offerings specified that satisfy the desires of rTa-rgo (paras viii, xii). In addition to offering articles of Indian inspiration, such as the *dpag-bsams-shing* (wish-fulfilling tree) *rgyal-srid rin-chen sna-bdun* (seven precious articles of royal sovereignty) and *'dod 'jo-ba* (cow yielding all desires) (para v), a large variety of animals indigenous to Upper Tibet are presented to the deities (paras vi, vii). These include many of the animals used by the *lha-pa* as spirit helpers.

The war-like nature of the rTa-rgo brotherhood is clearly reflected in the armaments that they are offered (para viii). The *mda 'dar* is presented as another gift (para viii); its affinity with indigenous deities such as rTa-rgo helps to explain its widespread usage by the spirit-mediums who wave it around, just as described in this text. *Lha chen rta sgo'i mchod bskang* also notes the objects given to rTa-rgo's consorts and other deities in his entourage (paras xi–xvi), the goddess mates being particularly well represented in the invocations of the spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet. This wide circle of deities represents a significant portion of the native pantheon of the central Byang-thang. Among the most enigmatic member of rTa-rgo's retinue is Bya-dkar grags-pa (Famous White Bird) (para xii). The identity of this divine figure is no longer clear but as we have learned, birds are an integral part of the entourages of mountain gods, which are used in the service of the spirit-mediums. Among the gifts offered to rTa-rgo's circle is a golden arrow to a male deity and a turquoise spindle (*phang*) to a female deity (para xiii). These objects constitute ancient Tibetan symbols of manhood and womanhood respectively. In a myth of origins, a Bon marriage text records that two turquoise

arrows, a golden arrow and a golden spindle originated from three heavenly eggs, which came into being through the union of Phywa-gang g.yang-grags and Srid-pa'i bzang-ma (Karmay 1998: 150).

The prominence of rTa-rgo in the sacred geography of the Byang-thang is underscored by the fact that the Rol-pa rkya/skya-bdun are recorded as being a part of his entourage (para xiv). The analogy of vassal kings under the authority of an emperor is quite appropriate to illustrate the varying degrees of power and influence of these divine lords. In the next section, *Lha chen rta sgo'i mchod bskang* calls attention to the endowments and protections expected of rTa-rgo and his entourage, in exchange for the gifts they have been offered (para xvii). Reflecting the priorities of the *lha-pa*, the first of these requests seeks protection from disease and the enlisting of rTa-rgo as the divine physician. Great stress is also placed on the utter destruction of foreign armies by rTa-rgo (paras xvii–xxv). The way in which this activity is continually repeated in the text may have something to do with the writing of the *Lha chen rta sgo'i mchod bskang* in the aftermath of the 13th century Mongol conquest of the region. The next part of the text describes the costume, equipment and mounts of the rTa-rgo brotherhood, which have distinctive martial overtones (paras xviii–xxv). These mounted warriors—with their bows and arrows and shields—reflect customs of war that have long prevailed in Tibet, as attested in both Bon textual references and the rock art record. The rTa-rgo brotherhood's fierce appearance and personality helps to explain why the *lha-pa* often behave violently while under the influence of these deities. Each member of the brotherhood controls a particular type of disease and harm-causing elemental spirit; homeopathically, they are responsible for preventing the illnesses and misfortunes emanating from them.

Near its conclusion, the text contains offerings to the animals in rTa-rgo's circle and statements asserting the privileged status of the ritualist (para xxvi). Presentation of the ensemble of ritual offerings to the animal helpers of rTa-rgo, such as lions, tigers, leopards, wolves, bears, birds, and wild yaks underlines the important mythic role these animals have had in *'brog-pa* culture probably since time immemorial. At the very least, these animals are entreated for utilitarian ends; to prevent the herds of livestock from being preyed upon by predators. More importantly, however, their close association with the divine rTa-rgo, as divinities in their own right, illustrates archaic aspects of Upper Tibet religion especially as typified in the tradition of spirit-mediumship.

Of special note is the *mi-dred*, which is literally a half-human and half-brown bear figure (para xxvi). In the vernacular of Upper Tibet, the term *mi-dred* is also used to describe the animal *dred/dred-mo/dred-mong*, the Tibetan subspecies of brown bear.[153] In Upper Tibet it is commonly believed that the bear, marmot and human have the same ancestry because they can stand on two legs. This kind of belief is also recorded in a Bon ritual text where it states, "The prince of existence 'Thing-ge . . . coupled with gNyan-mo to produce apes, marmots, brown bear, *and mi-dred*, these four. These are the four brothers who are like humans but are not human."[154] Similarly, according to the Na-khi, the man, monkey and bear are all of one origin because they have soles on their feet (Rock 1963a: 414). I have found that throughout Upper Tibet, there are folk-tales about brown bears (in sTod commonly called *rting-ris*, *rting-dom* and *rting-stong*) abducting women in ancient times and producing children with them. There do not however, appear to be any existing clans that trace their lineage to bears. At gNam-mtsho, brown bears of yore are said to have put on the conical felt hat (*phying-zhwa*) of the region's shepherds (*A-pha hor*) and signal from afar for a shepherdess to approach. Thinking it was one of her own kind, she would come near and be seized by the bear. He would take her to his lair and the children they produced had both ursine and human characteristics. Sometimes the woman would escape but she could only take the human part of the child with her. Her husband having rent it asunder kept the bear-half. In accord with such myths, it is sometimes said that brown bears leave the footprints of humans. According to the *lha-pa* Pho-bo lha-dbang, in gNam-ru, it is believed that brown bears with white faces and partially white pelage resemble humans, and that animals with this coloration are manifestations of *yul-lha* and *gzhi-bdag*. In

[153] *Ursus arctos pruinosus*. For taxonomic and habitat data see Schaller 1998, pp. 191–195.

[154] See *Mu ye pra phud phya'i mthur thug*, folio 16, lns. 3–6. This text of 36 folios has been photographically reproduced in Karmay and Nagano 2002. In this account, the fourth brother, the *mi-dred*, is not listed. Although the text is attributed to King Khri-srong lde-btsan (742–797), the inclusion of Kublai Khan in the text, and references to the Mongols, Chinese and Tibetans being the sons of 'Thing-ge, indicates that it was not written before the 13th century (Karmay and Nagano 2002: xi, xii).

Seng 'khor ma-mig (southern sGer-rtse county), the remnants of an archaic origin myth regarding the brown bear have been orally preserved:[155] In the beginning of time, there were only two male brown bears on the earth. One of them took a *srin-mo* as his wife, begot children and lived in the *srin-yul*. The other brown bear took a human wife named rMes-rmes (Ancestress/Grandmother) and begot seven children, the forebears of both bears and humans (at least some of them). In my view, the pervasive occurrence of myths that speak of a genealogical interrelationship between humans and bears hark back to the earliest tier of the cultural history of Upper Tibet. They belong to what might be called the aboriginal period of cultural development in the region, and prehistoric, far-ranging mythological interconnections with north Asia may well be indicated.[156]

In the Bon religion, there is a ritual text for the deity Mi-dred-ma (Bear Woman), a manifestation of the great protectress Srid-pa'i rgyal-mo (Queen of Existence).[157] According to Bon tradition, she is thus called because her mount is a brown bear. It appears likely to me that her creation is a later adaptation of the oral tradition that affirms a kinship between brown bears and humans. In her text, Mi-dred-ma is described as sitting on a carpet of flayed human skin, amid a castle of bone and a rippling lake of blood, located in the middle of a terrific cemetery. She is dark red in color, and has three heads and six arms. She rides a brown bear and subdues the innumerable worlds. One of the main members of her retinue is Srog-

[155] This myth was shared by the Ma-mig (sGer-rtse county) *sngags-pa* Kun-dga' rdo-rje (born circa 1932), well respected for his knowledge of local history and culture.

[156] Likewise, bears are part of far-ranging genealogical lore in northern Asia. In Siberia, the bear cult reflects archaic pre-shamanistic traditions (Jacobson 1993: 183). For example, the supreme deity of the Evenk is Amaka, which means both paternal ancestor and bear (Anisimov 1963: 163). In an Evenk origin myth, it is recorded that certain lineages descended from a girl who had a man and a bear as husbands, in the time before there was the bow and arrow (Vasilevich 1963: 68). Likewise, the Tunguz-speaking Golds of east Siberia consider the bear an ancestor who once coupled with a woman, and pay great respect to it (Baldick 2000: 143). This kinship link is also suggested by the practice of young Yakut hunters who simulate the sexual act on a slain bear (*ibid.*: 145). Ancestral connections with the bear are also hinted at in Na-khi funerary rituals. This pertains to the *dto-mba* (priests) who don a bearskin while erecting the *gv-gyi* (bear house) prepared for the effigy of the deceased (Rock 1963a: 149).

[157] *Srid rgyal dpon g.yog gi bskang bzhags bdud rtsi'i rgya mtsho*, attributed to a teacher of the sGo clan named Kro-ta wer-zhi, (New Collection of Bon *bka' brten*, vol. 88, nos. 971–981).

zan nag-mo (Female Black Life-Force Eater), who has dog, wolf, fox and brown bear-headed forms. Mi-dred-ma also has four subsidiary manifestations of the cardinal directions, which includes A-ma dred-de-ma (Mother Female Brown Bear) of the east. She is bright white in color and rides a nine-headed turquoise dragon. Mi-dred-ma and her circle are recorded as repelling sudden onset diseases, obstacles to life, foreign enemies, periods of strife epidemics, malignant influences of the *gza'* (planetary gods) and *klu*, defilements of impurity, *sri* eaters [of life], the *bdud* (demons) of life and misfortune, and the oath-breaking, harming hateful enemies and obstructers. As we have seen, the healing functions assigned Mi-dred-ma are echoed in the brown bear remedial deity of the spirit-mediums, both of which appear to stem from antecedent tradition.

In conclusion, the *Lha chen rta sgo'i mchod bskang* enunciates more desires and aspirations that the deities and their retinues are expected to provide for (para xxvii). These involve both apotropaic and fortune bestowing modes. The text refers to rTa-rgo's identity as a *yul-lha*, *pho-lha* and *sgra-bla* (*dgra-lha*) (para xxvii), the three most represented forms of mountain deities for the spirit-mediums:

> (i) *Kyai*! This beautiful white snow mountain looks like the magnificent Ri-rab lhun-po.[158] Its peak touches the expanse of space. Its white cloud vestments form an erected parasol. On the summit mists are bound like a regal turban,[159] and there are the light rays of the sun and moon *tha la la*.[160] The base of the mountain is upon land that unfolds like a lotus, the great source of precious waters.
>
> (ii) [This mountain] has beautiful spurs of five different [colored jewels], innumerable nectarous herbs, a multitude[161] of wild ungulate brothers playfully dancing, and much birdsong *kyu ru ru*.[162] The voice of the female wild yak is always circling it. Lammergeiers with outstretched wings circle around[163] the dazzling and majestic rocks above the foot

[158] The mountain at the center of the world axis.

[159] *'Gying-thod*. According to Bon tradition, a special kind of turban used by pre-Imperial royalty and their *gshen* priests, hence my translation 'regal turban'. *'Gying* connotes sternness, majesty and an imposing manner.

[160] *Tha la la* conveys the shimmering and radiance of light rays.

[161] Alternatively, *spun-dgu* could refer to nine types of wild ungulates native to the region, such as the antelope (*gtsod*), gazelle (*dgo-ba*), wild yaks (*'brong*) argali sheep (*gnyan*), blue sheep (*gna' ba*), antlered deer (*sha-ba*), musk deer (*gla*), etc.

[162] *Kyu ru ru* is the quality of the birdsong: the trilling, chirping and warbling of birds.

[163] *Khor ro ro*. This describes the circling of birds in flight.

of the mountain. Here there are many medicinal plants, moist grasslands, luxuriant gardens, and dancing forests *shigs se shig*.[164] There are a multitude of burrowing and running carnivores. Outside, rTa-sgo is like a snow mountain, and inside it is like a jeweled divine palace, a palace pleasing to behold. Here there is every kind of desirous thing, the quintessence of all that is desired. Choice victuals and beverages.

(iii) *Kyai!* Inside this castle is the sovereign protector of the northern quarter, called rTa-sgo lha-btsan of the snow mountain. His father is Lha-rgyal 'bum gyi rje (King Lha Lord of One Hundred Thousand), and he is of the same clan as the *lha* of mDo-gam.[165] His mother is Klu-mo btsan-mo rgyal (Queen Female *Klu* Female *bTsan*), and she is of the same clan as the *klu* of wealth and riches. From the skillful means of the father and the wisdom of the mother manifested their sons, the handsome youth of the *lha*, the seven rTa-sgo brothers, their escort, the eighth one, and an inconceivable number of brother and sister manifestations.

(iv) [The seven brothers are] the chief Lha-btsan 'bum-me rje (Lha-btsan Lord of One Hundred Thousand Fires), Ngo-dmar lha-btsan mtshal-thig can (Red Face Lha-btsan with Vermilion Spots), Gyer-rgod lha-btsan dbyug-pa rje (Wild Gyer Lha-btsan Lord of the Staff),[166] Gangs-lung lha-btsan mchog-dkar rje (Mountain Country Lha-btsan Lord of the Bow), Khri-mun lha-btsan zur-ra rje, dPa'i lha-btsan rnga-khur rje (Heroic Lha-btsan Lord Drum Carrier), and Ma-mo'i Lha-btsan U-kyu rje[167] (Lha-btsan of the Ma-mo Lord of the Good Fortune Symbol). Their appearance is that of wonderful manifestations. All have white-colored bodies with red complexions, emitting rays of light. On their bodies they wear red *ta-hun*.[168] On their heads are tied red silk *'gying-thod* (regal turbans). In their hands they hold golden vases.[169]

(v) We fulfill your wishes[170] by a golden wheel of one thousand spokes, a queen, a jewel, and a minister. We fulfill the wishes of Lha-btsan and his entourage. We fulfill the wishes of Lha-btsan and his entourage

[164] *Shigs se shig* depicts the movement of trees swaying in the wind.
[165] The eastern or lower part of Tibet.
[166] Karmay (1998: 397, fn. 56) notes that in old usage, as well as in the dialects of A-mdo, the word *rgod* means brave.
[167] *U-kyu* in fortune-summoning rituals (*g.yang 'gugs*) is a vehicle and symbol of good fortune. In contemporary ritual this is a kind of butter sculpture.
[168] Evidently, a kind of Mongolian or Chinese costume.
[169] The rTa-rgo brothers are attired like ancient Tibetan royalty. The golden vase (*gser gyi bum-pa*) is a symbol of good fortune and prosperity carried by various deities. In the Bon tradition, its origins are traced to pre-Imperial times.
[170] *Thugs dam bskang*. This means to fulfill, satisfy or provide for the wishes, desires and likes of the deities.

by an elephant, excellent horse and general, the seven precious articles of royal sovereignty. We fulfill the wishes of Lha-btsan and his entourage by a vase of treasures, a wish-fulfilling tree, a cow yielding all desires,[171] and wild grains (*ma-rmos*). We fulfill the wishes of Lha-btsan and his entourage by five precious substances,[172] a bolt of silk, various types of grains, and as many of as there are.

(vi) We fulfill the wishes of Lha-btsan and his entourage by a lake, a river, a spring, a bathing tank, and nectarous waters.[173] We fulfill the wishes of Lha-btsan and his entourage by a white umbrella decorated with peacock feathers, a vase, a wheel, and a golden fish. We fulfill the wishes of Lha-btsan and his entourage by a conch, a lotus, a *dpal-dbye* (endless knot), and a victory banner, the eight auspicious symbols. We fulfill the wishes of Lha-btsan and his entourage by a *khyung*, a male vulture, a female eagle, the powerful and wrathful assembly of birds. We fulfill the wishes of Lha-btsan and his entourage by a cuckoo, a peacock, a crane, the beautiful winged creatures of melodious songs. We fulfill the wishes of Lha-btsan and his entourage by an assembly of hawks, owls, and *srin-bya* (a kind of owl), the senders of bad omens (*ltas-ngan*) back to the enemy.

(vii) We fulfill the wishes of Lha-btsan and his entourage by a lion, tiger, leopard, black bear, brown bear, the assembly of land carnivores with gorgeous fur. We fulfill the wishes of Lha-btsan and his entourage by a fierce wild yak that looks like an imposing mountain, a deer, a *rkyang* and an argali sheep, the assembly of wild ungulates. We fulfill the wishes of Lha-btsan and his entourage by a magnificent horse and a white sheep with decorative cloths and feathers suspended from it. We fulfill the wishes of Lha-btsan and his entourage by a red *ber*[174] costume with gold dots and Sog (Mongolian) boots with turquoise designs and golden upturned toes.

(viii) We fulfill the wishes of Lha-btsan and his entourage by armor, a helmet, a great shield, a sword, and a bow and arrow, the accouterments of the hero sallying forth to battle. We fulfill the wishes of Lha-btsan and his entourage by a beautiful regimental banner, various kinds of weapons and by waving an arrow ornamented with

[171] *'Dod 'jo'i ba*. This connotes all the delectable dairy products produced by the cow.
[172] *Rin-chen lnga/rin-chen sna-lnga*: silver (*dngul*), gold (*gser*), turquoise (*g.yu*), coral (*byu-ru*) and pearl (*mu-tig*), with some substitutions allowable.
[173] These offerings and those that follow could also be conceived of in the plural. In most ritual performances only one or a pair of most objects is offered. These are frequently symbolic representations of what is called for in the text.
[174] The *ber* is a kind of large cape such as the ones used at the *'cham* (ritual dance performances).

ribbons of five different colors. We fulfill the wishes of Lha-btsan and his entourage by the drum, *gshang*, flute and *pi-wang* (long-necked lute), the melodious sounding signalers of the components of the oath.[175] We fulfill the wishes of Lha-btsan and his entourage by *rgyun gi gtor-ma*,[176] elixir,[177] first offerings of blood, *tshogs* offerings,[178] and many, many *gtor-ma*.

(ix) We fulfill the wishes of Lha-btsan and his entourage. When the great god rTa-sgo and his entourage are itinerant, we offer mounts (*chibs*), components of the oath, a *mkha' lding*,[179] an excellent horse, and other ambulatory domestic animals. There are no more superior mounts than these. When you are stationary we offer a castle. There is no more impregnable castle than this. When you are performing activities we offer attendants. There are no better assistants than these. When you encounter the enemy use this army. There is no better army than this. We fulfill the wishes of Lha-btsan and his entourage by various kinds of offerings and desired gifts.

(x) [With all of the above offerings] we fulfill the wishes of your father Lord Hundred Thousand. We fulfill the wishes of your mother Queen Klu-btsan. We fulfill the wishes of Lha-btsan Lord Hundred Thousand. We fulfill the wishes of Lord Vermilion Spots. We fulfill the wishes of Lord Staff. We fulfill the wishes of Lord Bow. We fulfill the wishes of Lord Zur-ra. We fulfill the wishes of Lord Drum Carrier. We fulfill the wishes of Lord U-kyu. Please accept these *tshogs* offerings and *gtor-ma*. Carry out the activities entrusted to you.

(xi) *Kyai*! We fulfill the wishes of the other one, this minister Yul-sa dkar-po g.yul-chas can (White Yul-sa with Battle Dress), the obedient friend of rTa-sgo. We fulfill the wishes [of this one] who looks like a set red turquoise. We fulfill the wishes of the five queens loved by rTa-sgo, the five *sman* queens, Dang-ra las kyi dbang-mo che (Great Ocean Woman with the Power of Destiny),[180] Dang-chung g.yu yi zur-

[175] *Dam-rdzas*. This refers to the objects and supports of the deities found in the ritual that help bind them to their oaths of allegiance to the Bon religious practitioners.

[176] A kind of *gtor-ma* for wrathful deities. It is triangular-shaped, red in color, with triangular decorations and butter medallions. These sharply pointed *gtor-ma* recall the shape of mountains and were part of ancient Bon ritual practices (cf. dGe 'dun chos 'phel 1994: 63, 64).

[177] *sMan*. In this context this refers to an alcoholic extract of medicinal ingredients often used in ritual offerings to wrathful deities.

[178] Sacrificial cakes.

[179] Literally, 'sky-soarer', the *khyung*.

[180] A description of the primary goddess of Dang-ra is found in *Dang ra lcam dral gyis* (= *gyi*) *bskang ba*, compiled, redacted or written by rMa-ston srol 'dzin (born

phud can (Little Ocean with Turquoise Head Ornament),[181] sMan-chung g.yu yi za-ma-tog (Little sMan with Turquoise Milk-Pail), Da-yar se-sman go-de-ma, and Kre-de'i mtsho-sman thing-kha-ma.[182] We fulfill your wishes with pure female *bshos*.[183]

(xii) We fulfill the wishes of dGe-rgan klu-btsan of the powerful helper hosts of rTa-sgo. We fulfill his wishes by the sound of the drum and *gshang*. We fulfill the wishes of his obedient friend 'Om-rong skyes-bu (Holy Man of 'Om Valley).[184] We fulfill his wishes by the many regalia of the tiger.[185] We fulfill the wishes of the brother of Kre-de'i mtsho-sman, gNam-do dkar-po.[186] We fulfill the wishes of the Four Champions.[187] We fulfill the wishes of the Famous White Bird.

(xiii) We fulfill the wishes of rTa-sgo's mTsho-sman phyug-mo (Lake sMan Woman of Riches) by a virtuous woman.[188] We fulfill the wishes of g.Ya' ri phyug-mo (Slate Mountain Woman of Riches). We fulfill her wishes by the grain harvest. We fulfill the wishes of the divine circle of bTsan-gang,[189] the *btsan* army comrades of rTa-sgo. We fulfill

1092) (*rTa dang tshogs bskang*, nos. 151–165), no. 155: "You are a beautiful sky blue lady. You have a turquoise *go-cog**. You have many braids with jingling turquoise. On your body you wear a *la'u* (ancient style mantle or robe) with *'phra-men* (a semi-precious stone) and rainbow designs. You have a silver mirror. You ride a blue turquoise female deer with a blue turquoise halter and golden bridle."

* A helmet-like headdress that can magically protect a wearer against attack.

[181] Alternatively, *Zur-phud* could denote a kind of coiffure.

[182] These are the five *sman* (benefactress) goddesses who reside in five lakes, in the general vicinity of the rTa-rgo mountain range. Their lake abodes in the order found in the text are: Dang-ra g.yu-mtsho, Dang-chung mtsho, Ngang-rtse mtsho*, Da-rog mtsho and bKra-ri gnam-mtsho. For an invocatory text dedicated to these five deities see Bellezza 2001, pp. 81–87.

* There is some question as to the abode of sMan-chung g.yu yi za-ma-tog. It is said by some residents of Dang-ra that she resides on a small mountain in Nag-tshang La-stod.

[183] *bShos/bshos-bu* is a kind of *gtor-ma*.

[184] His residence is a defile on the rTa-rgo river. See Bellezza 1997, p. 327 (fn. 43).

[185] *sTag-chas sna-dgu*. Alternatively, this could refer to nine types of attire or regalia of the tiger. In any event, this is a metaphor describing the costumes, weapons and paraphernalia of males.

[186] This is the long headland, on the east side of bKra-ri gnam-mtsho, popularly called Do dril-bu. For the archaeology of this location see Bellezza 2001, pp. 237–243.

[187] Gyad-chen bzhi. According to Gu-ru 'od-zer of the Bon monastery in 'Om-bu, this group of deities is the same as that known to the Buddhists as rGyal-chen ri-bzhi, mountains in each of the cardinal directions flanking bKra-ri gnam-mtsho. He bases his assertion on information passed down to him from his elders. For lore on the rGyal-chen ri-bzhi see Bellezza 2001, pp. 228, 229.

[188] Dang-ra g.yu-mtsho. Her offering *sman-btsun* can also mean 'queen'.

[189] In another copy of the text at my disposal: bTsan-khang.

the wishes of Gyer-rgod khra-mo (Wild Gyer Wrathful Woman). We fulfill the wishes of her obedient friend Jo-bo lha-ri (Elder Brother Divine Mountain).[190] We fulfill his wishes by a golden arrow with turquoise feathers. We fulfill the wishes of Jo-mo 'bri-rdzi (Elder Sister Yak Herder) We fulfill her wishes by a turquoise spindle and agate.

(xiv) We fulfill the wishes of the nine *ma-sangs* brothers.[191] We fulfill their wishes by a beautiful bow, arrow and sword (*'khor-gsum*). We fulfill the wishes of the famous *btsan* of the north, Byang-btsan rol-pa rkya-bdun, the subjects of the rTa-sgo gods who live at the northern mountain. We fulfill their wishes by the red *bshos* of the *btsan*. We fulfill the wishes of Byang-sman phyug-mo (Northern sMan Woman of Riches), and her 990,000 *byang-sman* as well, the girlfriends of rTa-sgo, the various *byang-sman*. We fulfill their wishes with a necklace of *gzi* and agate. We fulfill the wishes of Thog-rol rje, the obedient friend of rTa-sgo, the black slate mountain king of the *rgyung*.[192] We fulfill the wishes of mThu-bo che, the great and powerful king of nine mountains.

(xv) We fulfill the wishes of Sha-dmar g.ya' yi btsan-dmar (Red Deer Red bTsan of the Slates), the haughty *btsan*. We fulfill the wishes of the terrific, wrathful lord, the younger brother Shang bdud-btsan. We fulfill the wishes of the lesser sman, lCam-mo na-chung ras-thod-ma (Younger Sister Woman with the Cotton Turban). We fulfill the wishes of Lha-g.yag dkar-po (Divine White Yak). We fulfill the wishes of his subjects and friends, and Jo-bo sku-lha (Elder Brother Personal God), of the three supports, the divine circle of three brothers.

(xvi) We fulfill the wishes of the queen Byang-sman gtso-mo g.yu-mdangs-ma (Mistress of the Northern Sman with the Turquoise complexion). We fulfill her wishes with precious gold dust. We fulfill the wishes of other members of your distinguished entourage, the *lha*, the wild *sman*, the assembly of haughty ones, and their circles. We fulfill their desires by the five desirous offerings.[193] We fulfill the wishes of

[190] According to Gu-ru 'od-zer, this is probably a reference to the *yul-lha* of Dang-chung, Jo-bo gtsug.

[191] According to legend, the *ma-sangs* were rulers of Tibet in ancient times. For further information see Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, pp. 156, 224; Norbu 1995, pp. 14–16.

[192] This may be a reference to one of the rGyung-dgu, nine powerful mountains of Zhang-zhung origin spread across Upper Tibet and probably extending into Khu-nu (Kinnaur). Three of the best known mountains of *rgyung* in Tibet are the *yul-lha* of Sa-dga': Shel-rgyung/Zhes-rgyung, 'Ur-rgyung and Khen-rgyung (sp.?).

[193] *'Dod-yon-lnga* includes: 1) body—soft and sumptuous things, 2) eye—beautiful things, 3) ear—melodious sounds, 4) nose—fragrant scents, and 5) tongue—delicious edibles.

rTa-sgo lha-btsan, your entourage, outer circle, assembly of manifestations, and the manifestations of yourself. We fulfill your wishes by *tshogs* offerings and *gtor-ma*.

(xvii) Do not send human diseases to us and the sponsors [of the ritual]. Be the doctor who ministers to the sick. Do not set the enemy or thieves onto our wealth. Be the protector guarding people and wealth. Do not send frost or hail to the fields. Be the repeller of hail and thunderbolts, the grand Bon [po]. Mighty travel god of wayfarers, obtain the yaks and horses of the north.[194] *Gra-bla* of gold miners, open the door of the precious gold treasure. Invincible general, conqueror of enemies, utterly destroy[195] foreign armies. Consume the blood and flesh of the bodies of the enemy destroyers of the [Bon] doctrine and the obstructers. Do not ignore or transgress the oath-holders. Perform the activities entrusted to you.

(xviii) *Kye!* rTa-sgo Lha-btsan Lord of One Hundred Thousand Fires, the chief of all the *sde-brgyad* (eight orders of spirits), has a white-colored body with a red complexion. His person is clad in conch armor and a conch helmet, and he is [equipped] with a bow and arrow, sword, and shield with rainbow designs. In his hand, he grasps a white spear with a flag attached (*mdung-dar*). He rides a light orange-colored horse. He is surrounded by a circle of one hundred thousand *lha-btsan*. We fulfill the wishes of the general of the *lha*. Eradicate the hateful enemies. Utterly destroy foreign armies. Dispel all harm that comes from above.[196]

(xix) Lord Red Face Lha-btsan with Vermilion Spots has a brightly blazing red-colored body. His person is clad in white copper armor and a white copper helmet, and he is [equipped] with a bow and arrow, sword, and shield with rainbow designs. In his hand, he grasps a red spear with a flag attached. He rides a red horse with a vermilion mouth. He is surrounded by a military circle of one hundred thousand *btsan*. We fulfill the wishes of the king of the *btsan*. Eradicate the hateful enemies. Utterly destroy foreign armies. Dispel all diseases of piercing pain [caused by] the *btsan*.

(xx) Wild Gyer Lha-btsan Lord of the Staff has a majestic purple-colored body. His person is clad in crystal armor and a crystal helmet,

[194] In another copy of the text found at the Khri-brten nor-bu rtse monastery this passage reads instead, "obtain good plunder and horses" (*jag yag cang shes thob par mdzod*).

[195] *Thal-ba rdul du rlog*. It literally means 'destroy to dust'.

[196] Refers to harm originating with the *lha, lha-min, gza'*, and other celestial sources.

and he is [equipped] with a bow and arrow, sword, and shield with rainbow designs. He rotates a multi-colored banner aloft. He rides a dark-brown horse with a white spot on its head. He is surrounded by a military circle of one hundred thousand *srin*. We fulfill the wishes of the general of the *srin*. Eradicate the hateful enemies. Utterly destroy foreign armies. Dispel all harm of the *rag-sha* and *srin-po*[197]

(xxi) Mountain Country Lha-btsan Lord of the Bow has a red-colored body with a yellow complexion. His person is clad in golden armor and a golden helmet, and he is [equipped] with a bow and arrow, sword, and shield with rainbow designs. In his hand, he hoists a spear with a regimental banner attached. He rides a pale yellow antelope.[198] He is surrounded by a military circle of one hundred thousand *klu*. We fulfill the wishes of the general of the *klu*. Eradicate the hateful enemies. Utterly destroy foreign armies. Dispel all the harm of the *klu*.

(xxii) Khri-mun lha-btsan zur-ra rje has a dark red-colored body and a fierce manner. His person is clad in silver armor and a silver helmet, and he is [equipped] with a bow and arrow, sword, and shield with rainbow designs. In his hand, he hoists a regimental banner in the ten directions.[199] He rides a brown horse with a white mouth. He is surrounded by a circle of one hundred thousand *bdud-btsan*. We fulfill the wishes of the general of the *bdud*. Eradicate the hateful enemies. Utterly destroy foreign armies. Dispel all the harm of the *bdud*.

(xxiii) Heroic Lha-btsan Lord Drum Carrier has a majestic dark purple-colored body. His person is clad in copper armor and a copper helmet, and he is [equipped] with a bow and arrow, sword, and shield with rainbow designs. In his hands, he holds the drum and *gshang* musical instruments. He rides a tan horse with a turquoise mane. He is surrounded by a circle of one hundred thousand *dmu-btsan*. We fulfill the wishes of the general of the *dmu*.[200] Eradicate the hateful enemies. Utterly destroy foreign armies. Dispel all the harm of the *dmu*.

(xxiv) Lha-btsan of the Ma-mo Lord of the Good Fortune Symbol has a beautiful bright white-colored body. His person is clad in iron armor and an iron helmet, and he is [equipped] with a bow and arrow, sword, and shield with rainbow designs. In his hand, he holds a bag of silver. He rides a tawny horse with a red mane and tail. He is surrounded by an army of one hundred thousand *ma-mo*. We fulfill the wishes of the general of the *ma-mo*. Eradicate the hateful enemies. Utterly destroy foreign armies. Dispel all epidemics of the *ma-mo*. When he takes his horse out for enjoyment it has a bridle and saddle ornamented with beautiful decorations. This lovely swift horse eradicates the enemy. We fulfill the wishes of this *cang-shes rta* (thoroughbred horse). Be our helper who carries out all our desires and those of the benefactors [of the ritual].

(xxv) Your (rTa-sgo's) obedient comrade is White Yul-sa Holder of the Battle Dress with the white silk regal turban and dress, and a bow and arrow, sword, and shield with rainbow designs. He holds a *khram-shing*[201] and a *dar 'phru*[202] in his hands. He rides a large beige horse. He commands an army of one hundred thousand. We fulfill your wishes mighty one. Eradicate the hateful enemies. Utterly destroy foreign armies. Dispel all nine kinds of bad omens. Your adjunct military force is as great as a cavalry of 360, a circle of 21,000 *sman*, an obedient friend of wrathful potency, and four [auxiliary] armies.

(xxvi) We fulfill the wishes of the lions, tigers, leopards, iron [colored] wolves, black bears, boars, *mi-dred*, soaring winged creatures, and wild yaks, and your entire manifested entourage. If there is no one to offer to the gods how can the magical power of the gods come forth? If humans do not have vigilant deities, who will be the supporter of humans? There are many officiants and performers [of rites] but I, the yogi,[203] am an inseparable friend. Many people call and invite you but I the yogi, am the performer of religious activities. Great god rTa-sgo and your circle do not let your minds be inattentive.

(xxvii) We fulfill your wishes by pleasing rhythms. We fulfill your wishes by good rhyming words. We fulfill your wishes by profound contemplation. We fulfill your wishes by the first choice [of food and beverages] and *gtor-ma*. We fulfill your wishes by red meat and blood. We fulfill your wishes by various kinds of desirous things. We fulfill the wishes of the Bon protectors. We fulfill the wishes of the holy men *sgra-bla*. We fulfill the wishes of the mighty *pho-lha*. We fulfill the wishes of the mighty *yul-lha*. We fulfill the wishes of the reliance gods.[204] Please accept these *tshogs* and offerings. Increase the property, emergent

[197] Man-eating demons of Indian epic origin.
[198] *Zag-dkar bstos-ru chibs*. This could also possibly refer to a horse with the markings of an antelope.
[199] *Phyogs-bcu*. The cardinal and intermediate directions, and upwards and downwards. This symbolizes rTa-rgo's domination of all territories.
[200] The *dmu*, a group of sky-dwelling deities, are described in Tucci 1949, p. 714; Dagkar 1999.

[201] Notched board used for destructive magic thought to have originated in the pre-Buddhist period. See Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, pp. 358, 359.
[202] Small flag or streamer worn on top of a Tibetan military helmet.
[203] If there is more than one ritualist, the plural form 'we' and 'yogis' can be interchanged with no grammatical modification to the text.
[204] *brTen-pa lha* refers to the deities relied upon and worshipped by the ritualist; in this case, particularly rTa-rgo and his circle.

reputation, life and merit of us, the yogis. Eliminate diseases, malevolent influences and obstacles. Quickly carry out all our aspirations. Assist us of white virtue. Perform the activities entrusted to you.

Transliteration of the Lha chen rta sgo'i mchod bskang *text*

(i) Kyai mdzes pa'i gangs ri dkar po 'di / brjid ldan ri rgyal lhun po 'dra / rtse mo nam mkha'i dbyings su reg / sprin dkar dar gyis gdugs phub nas / dbu la na bun 'gying thod bcing / nyi zla'i 'od zer tha la la / rtsa ba'i (= ba) chu gter che la zug / sa gzhi pad ma rgyas 'dra'i steng /

(ii) sna lnga'i (= lngas) mdzes pa'i cha ga can / rtsi thog sna tshogs bsam las 'das / ri dwags spun dgu rtse bro brdung / bya skad mang po kyu ru ru / 'brong gi sman dbyangs rgyun du 'khor / skad (= rked) pa brag ri rngam pa (= la) brjid / thang dkar gshog rgyang khor ro ro / sman khyug ne (= ni'u) seng skyad mo'i 'tshal ljong (= tshal ljon) shing gar stabs shigs se shig / gcan gzan spun dgu'i 'dzul zhing rgyug / phyi ltar rta sgo'i gangs ri la / nang ltar rin chen gzhal yas khang / ltas (= lta) na rdug (= sdug) pa'i pho brang yin / longs spyod 'dod dgu phun sum tshogs / zas bcas btung la khyad par 'phags /

(iii) kyai sku mkhar de yi nang shed na / byangs phyogs skyong ba'i mnga' bdag po / rta sgo gangs kyi lha btsan zer / yab gi (= ni) lha rgyal 'bum gyis (= gyi) rje / mdo gam lha dang rus gcig yin / yum ni klu mo btsan mo rgyal / klu phyug 'phen dang rigs rus gcig / yab yum thabs shes sprul pa'i sras / mtshar sdug ldan pa lha'i bu / rta sgo mched bdun rol dang brgyad / lcam dral sprul pa bsam mi khyab /

(iv) gtso bo lha btsan 'bum me rje / ngo dmar lha btsan mtshal thig can / gyer rgod lha btsan dbyug pa rje / gangs lung lha btsan mchog dkar rje / khri mun lha btsan zur ra rje / dpa'i lha btsan rnga khur rje / ma mo'i lha btsan U kyu rje / ngo mtshar sprul pa'i cha lugs can / tham cad sku mdog dkar po la / dmar ba'i mdang ldan 'od zer 'phro / sku la ta hun dmar po gsol / dbu la dar dmar 'gying thod can / phyag na gser gyi bum pa bsnams /

(v) khyed kyi thugs dam bskang ba ni / gser gyi 'khor lo rtsibs stong ldan / nor bu btsun mo blon po yis / lha btsan 'khor bcas thugs dam bskang / glang po rta mchog dmag dpon dang / rgyal srid

rin chen sna bdun gyi (= gyis) / lha btsan 'khor bcas thugs dam bskang* / gter gyi bum pa dpag bsams shing / 'dod 'jo'i ba dang ma rmong (= rmos) lo / *** / rin chen lnga dang dar zab dang / 'bru sna'i bye brag ji snyed kyis / *** /

* This line in the text is repeated as a refrain and is subsequently designated: / *** /

(vi) mtsho dang rtsang chab lu ma dang / khrus kyi rdzing bu bdud rtsi'i chu / *** / gdugs dkar ma bya'i sgro yis rgyan (= brgyan) / bum pa 'khor lo gser nya yi (= yis) / *** / dung dkar pad ma dpal dbye dang / rgyal mtshan bkra shis rtags brgyad kyis / *** / khyung dang rgod po glag mo dang / stobs ldan drags (= drag) po'i bya tshogs kyis / *** / khu byug rma bya khrung khrung dang / skad snyan mdzes pa'i 'dab chags kyis / *** / dgra la ltas ngan gtong ba'i / srin bya 'ug pa khra'i tshogs / *** /

(vii) seng ge stag gzig dom dred dang / spu bsdug (= sdug) gcan gzan sna tshogs kyis / *** / drag po'i 'brong chen ri ltar 'gying / sha rkyang snyan (= gnyan) dang ri dwags tshogs / *** / brjid ldan lha rta lug dkar dang / brgyan ras (= spras) phod kyis btags pa 'dis / *** / ber dmar gos kham gser thig ldan / sog lham g.yu ris gser 'bur can / *** /

(viii) khrab rmog phub chen 'khor gsum po / g.yul la 'jug pa'i dpa' chas kyis / *** / ru dar mdzes mtshon sna tshogs dang / mda' dar sna lnga'i g.yab dar gyis / *** / rnga gshang dung gling pi wang dang / sgra snyan 'bod pa'i dam rdzas kyis / *** / rgyun gyi gtor ma sman rag phud / tshogs mchod gtor ma'i (= ma) rgya chen gyis / *** /

(ix) mkha' lding rta mchog la sogs pa'i / rkang 'gros dam rdzas 'di dag gis / lha chen rta sgo 'khor bcas kyis (= kyi) / byon pa'i dus su chibs su 'bul / chibs la 'di las lhag pa med / bzhugs pa'i dus su mkhar du 'bul / mkhar la 'di bas btsan pa med / 'phrin las sgrub tshe pho nyar 'bul / mngag mi 'di las drag pa med / dgra dang 'phrad tshe dmag dpung mdzod / dpung la 'di bas lhag pa med / 'dod yon mchod pa sna tshogs kyis / *** /

(x) 'bum rje yab kyis (= kyi) thugs dam bskang / klu btsan rgyal mo'i thugs dam bskang / lha btsan 'bum rje'i thugs dam bskang /

mtshal thig rje'i thugs dam bskang / dbyug pa rje yi thugs dam bskang / mchog dkar rje'i thugs dam bskang / zur ra rje'i thugs dam bskang / rnga khur rje'i thugs dam bskang / U kyu rje'i thugs dam bskang / tshogs mchod gtor ma 'di bzhes la / bcol ba'i 'phrin las grub par mdzod /

(xi) kyai gzhan yang thugs dam bskang pa (= ba) ni / rta sgo'i bka' nyan grogs po ni / yul sa dkar po g.yul chas can / blon po de yi thugs dam bskang / g.yu dmar bzhags 'dra'i thugs dam bskang / rta sgo'i thugs byon mo btsun lnga / dang ra las kyi dbang mo che / dang chung g.yu yi zur phud can / sman chung g.yu yi za ma tog / da yar se sman go de ma / kre de'i mtsho sman mthing kha ma / sman btsun lnga yi thugs dam bskang / sman bshos gtsang mas thugs dam bskang /

(xii) rta sgo'i mthu dpung grogs mdzad pa / dge rgan klu btsan thugs dam bskang / rnga shang sgra yis thugs dam bskang / de'i bka' nyan grogs po ni / 'om rong skyes bu'i thugs dam bskang / stag chas sna dgu'i thugs dam bskang / kre de'i mtsho sman ming po ni / gnam rdo (= do) dkar po'i thugs dam bskang / gyad chen bzhi'i thugs dam bskang / bya dkar grags pas thugs dam bskang /

(xiii) rta sgo'i mtsho sman phyug mo ste / sman btsun de yi thugs dam bskang / g.ya' ri phyug mo'i thugs dam bskang / lo tog 'bru yis thugs dam bskang / rta sgo'i sdong zla dmag dpung (= dpon) btsan / btsan gang lha 'khor thugs dam bskang / gyer rgod khra mo'i thugs dam bskang / de yi bka' nyan grogs po ni / jo bo lha ri'i thugs da bskang / gser mda' g.yu sgros thugs dam bskang / jo mo 'bri rdzi'i thugs dam bskang / g.yu 'phang (= phang) mchong gis thugs dam bskang /

(xiv) ma sangs spun dgu'i thugs dam bskang / 'khor gsum mdzes pas thugs dam bskang / byang gi ri la gnas pa yi / byang btsan rol pa rkya bdun yang / rta sgo lha'i srid sde yin / byang btsan grags pa'i thugs dam bskang / btsan bshos dmar pos thugs dam bskang / byang sman phyug mo la sogs te / byang sman dgu khri dgu 'bum yang / rta sgo lha yi grogs mo yin / byang sman rnams kyi thugs dam bskang / gzi mchong spel ma'i thugs dam bskang / rta sgo'i bka' nyan grogs po ni / rgyung gi g.ya' nag rgyal po ni / thog rol rje'i thugs dam bskang / ri dgu'i rgyal po mthu bo che / mthu bo che yi thugs dam bskang /

(xv) sha dmar g.ya' yi btsan dmar ni / dregs pa btsan gyi thugs dam bskang / gcung po la shang bdud btsan ni / khro gtum rje yi thugs dam bskang / lcam mo na chung re (= ras) thod ma / sman phran de yi thugs dam bskang / lha g.yag dkar po'i thugs dam bskang / de'i srid sde grogs po ba / jo bo sku lha rten gsum ni / mched gsum lha 'khor thugs dam bskang /

(xvi) byang sman gtso mo g.yu mdangs ma / sman btsun de'i thugs dam bskang / rin chen gser phyes thugs dam bskang / gzhan yang khyed kyi bka' 'khor ni / lha dang sman rgod dregs pa'i tshogs / 'khor dang bcas pa'i thugs dam bskang / 'dod yon lnga yis thugs dam bskang / rta sgo lha btsan khyed rnams kyi / 'khor dang yang 'khor sprul pa'i tshogs / nyid sprul rnams kyi thugs dam bskang / / tshogs mchod gtor mas thugs dam bskang /

(xvii) bdag dang yon mchod 'khor bcas kyi / mi la na tsha ma gtong cig / nad la phan pa'i sman pa mdzod / nor la dgra rkun ma gtong cig / mi nor skyong ba'i srung ma mdzod / zhing la sad ser ma gtong cig / thog ser bzlog pa'i bon rgan mdzod / byes kyi byes lha gnyen (= gnyan) po ste / byang g.yag cang shes thob par mdzod / gser pa rnams kyi sgra bla ste / rin chen gser gyi gter sgo phyes / dmag dpon dbang phyug dgra 'dul te / mtha' dmag thal ba rdul du rlog / btsan pa bshig pa'i dgra dang bgegs / sha khrag phung po zhal du bzhes / ma g.yel ma 'da' dam can rnams / bcol ba'i 'phrin las grub par mdzod /

(xviii) kye sde brgyad kun gyi gtso bo ste / rta sgo lha btsan 'bum me rje / sku mdog dkar la dmar ba'i mdangs / sku la dung khrab dung rmog gsol / 'khor gsum gzha' ris phub dang bcas / phyag na mdung dar dkar po bsnams / chibs su ngang pa gser ldan bcibs / lha btsan 'bum gyi 'khor gyis bskor / lha yi dmag dpon thugs dam bskang / sdang ba'i dgra bo chams la phob / mtha' dmag thal ba rdul du rlog / steng gdon gnod pa thams cad bzlog /

(xix) ngo dmar lha btsan mtshal thig rje / sku mdog dmar la me 'od 'bar / sku la bse khrab bse rmog gsol / 'khor gsum gzha' ris phub dang bcas / phyag na dar mdung dmar po bsnams / chibs su dmar po mtshal kha bcibs / btsan dmag 'bum gyi 'khor gyis bskor / btsan rje rgyal po'i thugs dam bskang / sdang ba'i dgra bo chams la phob / mtha' dmag thal ba rdul du rlog / btsan gzer gnod pa thams cad bzlog /

(xx) gyer rgod lha btsan dbyug pa rje / sku mdog dmar smug brjid pa la / sku la shel khrab shel rmog gsol / 'khor gsum gzha' ris phub dang bcas / dar khra klad la bskor zhing phyar / chibs su kham nag mdong po bcibs / srin dmag 'bum gyi 'khor gyis bskor / srin gyi dmag dpon thugs dam bskang / sdang ba'i dgra bo chams la phob / mtha' dmag thal ba rdul du rlog / rag sha srin po'i gnod pa thams cad bzlog /

(xxi) gangs lung lha btsan mchog dkar rje / sku mdog dmar ser mdangs dang ldan / sku la gser khrab gser rmog gsol / 'khor gsum gzha' ris phub dang bcas / phyag na dar mdung ru mtshon phyar / zag dkar btsos (= gtsod) ru chibs su bcibs / klu dmag 'bum gyi 'khor gyis bskor / klu yi dmag dpon thugs dam bskang / sdang ba'i dgra bo chams la phob / mtha' dmag thal ba rdul du rlog / klu yi gnod pa thams cad bzlog /

(xxii) khri mun lha btsan zur ra rje/ sku mdog dmar nag khros pa'i-tshul / sku la dngul khrab dngul rmog gsol / 'khor gsum gzha' ris phub dang bcas / phyag na ru dar phyogs bcur phyar / chibs su bra'u (= bra'o) kha dkar chibs / bdud btsan 'bum gyi 'khor gyis bskor / bdud kyi dmag dpon thugs dam bskang / sdang ba'i dgra bo chams la phob / mtha' dmag thal ba rdul du rlog / bdud kyi gnod pa thams cad bzlog /

(xxiii) dpa bo'i lha btsan rnga khur rje / sku mdog smug nag brjid pa la / sku la zangs khrab zangs rmog gsol / 'khor gsum gzha' ris phub dang bcas / phyag na rnga gshang rol mo bsnams / chibs su gro bo g.yu rngog bcibs / dmu btsan 'bum gyi 'khor gyis bskor / dmu yi dmag dpon thugs dam bskang / sdang ba'i dgra bo chams la phob / mtha' dmag thal ba rdul du rlog / dmu yi gnod pa thams cad bzlog /

(xxiv) ma mo'i lha btsan U kyu rje / sku mdog mdzes ldan dkar gsal la / sku la lcags khrab lcags rmog gsol / 'khor gsum gzha' ris phub dang bcas / phyag na dngul gyi rkyal pa bsnams / chibs su rag pa phod (= phun) dmar bcibs / ma mo'i dmag tshogs 'bum gyi 'khor gyis bskor / ma mo'i dmag dpon thugs dam bskang / sdang ba'i dgra bo chams la phob / mtha' dmag thal ba rdul du rlog / ma mo'i dal yams thams cad bzlog / chibs pa rol du khrid pa la / sga srab mdzes pa'i rgyan gyis brgyan / dgra bo chams la 'bebs pa la / myur mgyog mdzes pa'i gyi ling yin / cang shes rta yi thugs dam bskang /bdag dang rgyu sbyor yon bdag gi / 'dod dgu 'grub pa'i sdong grogs mdzod /

(xxv) khyed kyi sdong zla bka' nyan ni / yul sa dkar po g.yul chas can / dar dkar 'gying thod na bza' can / 'khor gsum gzha' ris phub dang bcas / phyag na khram shing dar 'phru bsnams / chibs su gro dkar chen po bcibs / dmag tshogs 'bum gyi kha lo bsgyur / khyed kyi thugs dam gnyen (= gnyan) po bskang / sdang ba'i dgra bo chams la phob / mtha' dmag thal ba rdul du rlog / ltas ngan sna dgu thams cad bzlog / gzhan yang khyed kyi dmag dpung ni / rta dmag sum brgya drug cu dang / sman 'khor nyi khri cig stong dang / bka' nyan grogs po drag rtsal can / dpung bzhi dmag tshogs ji snyed dang /

(xxvi) seng ge stag gzig lcags spyang dang / dom dang phag rgod mi dred dang / mkha' lding 'dab chags g.yag rgod dang / 'khor tshogs sprul pa'i thugs dam bskang / lha la mchod pa'i mi med na / lha la mthu rtsal gang las 'byung / mi la mkhyen pa'i lha med na / mi yi rgyab dpung su yis byed / brten shing sgrub pa'i mi mang yang / mi 'bral 'grogs pa'i rnal 'byor bdag / 'bod cing bskul ba'i mi mang yang / 'phrin las bsgrub pa'i rnal 'byor bdag / lha chen rta sgo 'khor bcas kyis / thugs dgongs gzhan du ma g.yel bar /

(xxvii) gdung ba'i dbyangs kyis thugs dam bskang / sdeb legs tshig gis thugs dam bskang / ting 'dzin zab mos thugs dam bskang / phud dang gtor mas thugs dam bskang / sha khrag dmar gyis thugs dam bskang / 'dod yon sna tshogs thugs dam bskang / bon skyong srung ma'i thugs dam bskang / skye (= skyes) bo sgra'i bla'i thugs dam bskang / pho lha gnyan po'i thugs dam bskang / yul sa gnyan po'i thugs dam bskang / brten pa lha yi thugs dam bskang / tshogs dang mchod pa 'di bzhes la / rnal 'byor bdag cag 'khor bcas kyi / long spyod snyan grags 'byung ba dang / tshe dang bsod nams 'phel ba dang / nad gdon bar cad zhi ba dang / bsam pa'i don kun myur du sgrubs / dkar po dge ba'i sdong grogs mdzod / bcol ba'i 'phrin las grub par mdzod /

The second text we will examine for rTa-rgo is *rTa dang gnyis kyi bskang mdos* (*Enticements for the Fulfillment of Both rTa-rgo and Dang-ra*), written by gShen mi 'gyur gtsug-phud dbang-rgyal (born 1757). This

text is also found in the *rTa dang tshogs bskang* collection. This *mdos* ritual is a kind of enticement offering, whereby rTa-rgo and Dang-ra and their circles of deities are given pleasing things in order to persuade or coerce them to help realize the desires and needs of the ritualists and their benefactors.[205] This transaction between the deities and people involved in the ritual is intended to benefit both parties by augmenting their well-being and prestige. The *mdos* can also be used as a method of restitution if it has been determined that rTa-rgo and Dang-ra have been overstepped or provoked. In this case, the ritualist seeks redress for the individual (or community at large) physically hurt or whose interests were damaged by these deities. The origins of the *mdos* are described in a text found in the first volume (*stod-cha*) of the *sDe brgyad bzlog mdos* collection:[206]

> King Mu-khri btsan-po contracted a pernicious disease. The great *gshen* Nam-mkha' snang-mdog arranged the great *mdos* of secret space. King Mu-khri was liberated from his blockages (*bkag*). Afterwards, from where does the *mdos* originate? King gNam-ri blon-btsan (32nd Tibetan King) was infected by diseases of the *sa-bdag*, *klu* and *gnyan*. sTong-rgyung nam-mkha' (sTong-rgyung mthu-chen) was invited. He made the *mdos* and repelling ritual (*bzlog*) of universal existence. King gNam-ri was liberated from his blockages. Afterwards, from where does the *mdos* originate? The angry *yul-lha* made obstacles (*bar-chod*) for King Khri-srong sde-btsan. Bla-chen dran-pa was invited. He made the blissful great *mdos* of existence. King Khri-srong was liberated from his blockages.

mDos rituals are popularly prescribed by clerics and *lha-pa* to restore the balance between individuals and the mountain and lake deities. It goes to the heart of how the *lha-pa* and other residents of Upper Tibet traditionally perceive the etiology of disease and misfortune, and the way in which they can be alleviated. The *mdos* features an elaborate construction of the same name that functions as the temporary abode of deities while they are serving the ritualist. This construction is a microcosm of the world, specifically that of which rTa-rgo and Dang-ra are a part. In various symbolic forms, it includes the people, animals and natural resources present in the region.

[205] A general discussion on the *mdos*, an ancient class of rituals, is found in Tucci 1980, pp. 176–187.
[206] See *sPyi rgyug mdos mchod rin chen 'phring* (= *'phreng*) *ba* (New Collection of Bon *bka' brten*, vol. 27, nos. 807–846), no. 816, lns. 2–6. No author or finder is noted in the text.

The composition of *rTa dang gnyis kyi bskang mdos* is dictated by lines of primarily nine syllables, giving the text an intoned stress that makes for a distinctive chanting cadence. The rhythm of the seven-syllable and nine-syllable lines vary somewhat when chanted.

The first portion of the *rTa dang gnyis kyi bskang mdos* (nos. 278–283) details the preparations for the construction of the *mdos*, followed by visualizations that accompany the *mdos* ritual. I have chosen to translate the middle portion of the text (nos. 283, ln. 4 to 289, ln. 1), which structurally includes:

1) A poetic description of rTa-rgo.
2) An account of the ancient oath taken by the mountain deity.
3) A confession of the wrongs that the ritualists or sponsors may have wrought on the deities.
4) The work that rTa-rgo and Dang-ra are expected to carry out.
5) The various things offered them.

Among the offerings are *bshos* (sacrificial cakes) presented to the various elemental spirits that characterize the composition of Dang-ra and rTa-rgo and their circles of deities (para v). The final portion of the text (nos. 289–292) contains commands related to the work, aspirations and protection of the ritualists and their benefactors, similar to the ones found in the translation below:

> (i) *Kyai'*! You are known as rTa-sgo, the *bla-brag* (soul rock) of the Zhang-zhung Bon,[207] the snow mountain whose peak looks like it reaches the sky. This excellent abode, peak of white clouds and rainbows, appears as the grove of immortality and happiness *thibs se thib*.[208] In the middle reaches [of the mountain] there are various kinds of land carnivores *'u ru ru*.[209] At the base there is an unfrozen turquoise lake *me re re*.[210] There are portals of treasures that liberate by sight

[207] *Zhang-zhung bon gyi bla-brag*. This is a reference to the ancient belief that natural formations and mountains can act as a receptacle for the souls of individuals and collective groups. By enshrining the souls of the Bon-po of Zhang-zhung, the exceptional importance of rTa-rgo is clearly illustrated.
[208] *Thibs se thib* conveys that the clouds and rainbows are spreading through a swirling action.
[209] *'U ru ru* depicts the roaring, grunting, growling, and other sounds made by the animals.
[210] *Me re re* shows that the lake (Dang-ra g.yu-mtsho) is welling up and overflowing.

khrigs se khrig.[211] This is the place where herbs, trees, fruits and grains, a multitude of desirous things, spring up. This is the site where the Bon doctrine spreads and secret meditation develops.

(ii) The owner of such a place is mTsho-sman rgyal-mo and rTa-sgo lha-btsan and his circle of chiefs and secondary manifestations. The *gshen* practitioners by their minds fixed in contemplation invite you. In ancient times, in the presence of the omniscient Prince gShen-rab and the *dbal-gshen* gSang [ba] 'dus [pa] [you promised] that if called by the Bon [po] you would come, and if deputed that you would go. According to your promise, perform entirely whatever activities are entrusted to you. Do not forget, remember your avowed oath. Please come peacefully with an affectionate mind. Please stay at whatever beautiful seat you prefer. We devotedly prostrate and confess whatever we have done to cross you.

(iii) *Kyai!* Dang-ra mtsho-sman, gSer-thang yi-ge ma,[212] Dang-chung and the other one thousand *mtsho-sman* members;[213] rTa-sgo dge-rgan, and the rest of the assembly of haughty ones, we proffer favorite offerings to you. This great secret *mdos* is physically arrayed and manifested in the mind. The upper part of the platform of the *mdos,* which is as extensive as the inanimate external world, is ornamented by *gtor-ma, tshogs,* inner contents,[214] and the possessions of the gods. It is offered to Dang-ra mtsho-sman rgyal-mo and rTa-sgo lha-btsan and his circle of chiefs. We fulfill the awesome wishes of all of you.

(iv) Therefore, do not send human diseases to all the circle of superior men doctrine-holders, monks and disciples, or to the sponsoring benefactors, people and wealth. Increase their life and fortune. Do not send veterinary diseases to livestock, and foster their development. May the crops be without frost, hail, drought and insect pests. Send down the gathering clouds and rain in a timely manner. Make the harvest be good, and propagate livestock, people and wealth. Turn back misfortune, disease, demonic influences, enemies and thieves.

(v) Other offerings we give to you are decorated red *gtor-ma* amassed like a mountain, elixir, blood,[215] tea and milk aggregated like an ocean,

[211] *Khrigs se khrig* conveys that there are a series of neatly arrayed treasure portals, the various rock formations.
[212] gSer-thang yi-ge ma is a goddess residing on the pass between Dang-ra g.yu-mtsho and Dang-chung mtsho. See Bellezza 1997, pp. 337, 338.
[213] Alternatively, *mtsho-sman stong-sde* could mean 'one thousand *mtsho-sman* divisions'.
[214] *Nang-bcud.* This refers to all the living beings that inhabit the world.
[215] *Rag/rak-ta* (blood) usually refers to preparations made from the dried blood of animals that have died of natural causes, mixed with various medicinal ingredients.

the joyous offerings of the best and great secret *mdos.* We offer these to you Dang-ra mtsho-sman rgyal-mo and rTa-sgo lha-btsan and your circle of chiefs. We fulfill your wishes by butter lamps, flowers, *lha-sangs,*[216] water bowls, incense, *dkar-gsum,*[217] *mngar-gsum,*[218] jewels, grains, medicinal substances, and whatever *shing-ris,*[219] *nam-mkha',*[220] *rgyang-bu,*[221] arrow, spindle, decorated *pho-tong* and *mo-tong*[222] you prefer. We fulfill your wishes by decorated *bshos,* the *lha-bshos, klu-bshos, dmu-bshos, btsan-bshos* and *bdud-bshos,* and so on.

(vi) We fulfill your wishes by the multitude flying in the sky, the multitude treading in the middle, the multitude burrowing in the earth, and the various other kinds of figures of living beings. We fulfill your wishes by the beautiful forms of the mChod 'bul,[223] flowers, and the melodious sound of the drum, *gshang,* conch, and flute, etc. We fulfill your wishes by the smoke of fragrant incense and incense preparations covering like a cloud, well-presented dairy foods, sweets and [other] edibles. We fulfill your wishes by a tiger [skin], a leopard [skin], a

[216] A kind of *gtor-ma* mostly offered to pacific deities.
[217] The three white foods; milk, butter and curd.
[218] The three sweets; rock sugar, brown sugar and honey.
[219] This is a standard element of the *mdos* construction. It consists of a plate of wood colorfully decorated with designs such as a jewel, the sun and moon, lakes, mountains, birds, and terrestrial and aquatic animals.
[220] In this kind of ritual, usually an elaborate cross-shaped design made from thread, but it could also be made in other shapes, such as that of a *khyung.* For various types of *nam-mkha'* (glossed: thread-crosses) see Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956.
[221] In the context of this ritual, tiny strips of bamboo to which feathers and tufts of wool are attached by thread wrappings.
[222] *Pho-tong/ pho-gdong* and *mo-tong/ mo-gdong* are standard elements of the *mdos* construction. They consist of pointed plates of wood on which the figure of a man or woman has been painted. These function as ransom offerings in place of living members of the community (cf. Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 359).
[223] This denotes the mChod 'bul-ma, the eight goddesses who give offerings. They are envisioned as singing sweetly and moving gracefully. They are a constituent part of rituals in which tutelary deities are provided offerings. They belong to the group of higher deities (*u'i' mgron*), but in the context of this ritual they become part of the circle of rTa-rgo and Dang-ra, who are elevated to the second tier of deities (*yon-tan mgron*). The geographic directions, names and main attributes of the mChod 'bul-ma are as follows: 1) east—Li-shag 'phrul gyi me-long (eye/*spyan*) (butter lamp); 2) north—Kha-shag gser gyi khyud 'khor (ear/*snyan*) (drum, *gshang* and conch); 3) west—lGyum-shag mdzes-pa'i rma-bya (nose/*shangs*) (fragrant incense); 4) south—Re-shag g.yu yi dril-bu (tongue/*ljags*) (delicious nectar); 5) southeast—Tshu-shag gser gyi g.yung-drung (body/*sku*) (fine clothing); 6) northeast—rGya-shag me-tog ha-lo (speech/*gsung*) (beautiful flower); 7) northwest—rKyel-shag 'od kyi thig-le (dance/*gar*); 8) southwest—She-shag dpal gyi 'gur be'u (mind/*thugs*) (jeweled treasures). See the text *sPyi spungs skor gsum gyi yang bcud rtsod pa bzlog pa'i 'khor lo dbal gsas rngam pa'i las rim,* rediscovered by sPrul-sku dbyil-ston (*Bon skyong sgrub thabs bskang gsol bcas,* vol. 2, nos. 69 to 185), nos. 88, ln. 5 to 89, ln. 5.

lynx [skin], a wolf [skin], bolt of silk, colored wool, and the blessings of undistracted contemplative meditation. You are the king of the *yul-lha*, the heroic, potent, wrathful, powerful one.

Transliteration of rTa dang gnyis mdos excerpt

(i) Kyai' / zhang zhung bon gyi bla brag rta sgo zhes / gangs dkar rtse mo gnam la snyegs 'dra ri / 'chi med dga' tshal lta bu'i gnas mchog gi / rtse mo sprin dkar 'ja' tshon thibs se thib / skad (= rked) pa gcan gzan sna tshogs 'u ru ru / rtsa ba ma (= mal) gros g.yu mtsho me re re / mthong grol gter gyi sgo mo khrigs se khrig / rtsi shing 'bras 'bru 'dod dgu 'byung ba'i gnas / bon bstan dar zhing gsang sgom 'phel ba'i zhing /

(ii) de dra'i gnas bdag mtsho sman rgyal mo dang / rta sgo lha btsan gtso 'khor yang sprul bcas / sgrub gshen ting 'dzin yid kyis spyan drang nas / sngon tshe rnam mkhyen rgyal ba gshen rab dang / gsang 'dus stag la dbal gshen spyan snga ru / bon gyis bos na 'ong dang rbad (= sbad) na 'gro / ci bcol las kun sgrub par zhal bzhes bzhin / tha tshig dam bca' ma bsnyel dran mdzod la / brtse sems zhi bde'i ngang nas gshegs su gsol / rang mthun mdzes pa'i gdan la bzhugs su gsol / gus pas phyag 'tshal thugs 'gal ci mchis bshags /

(iii) kyai dang ra'i mtsho sman gser thang yi ge ma / dang chung la sogs mtsho sman stong sde dang / rta sgo dge rgan la sogs dregs pa'i tshogs / khyed la dgyes pa'i mchod pa 'bul ba ni / gsang ba'i mdos chen dngos bsham yid sprul 'di / mdos gzhong phyi snod 'jig rten yangs pa'i steng / gtor tshogs nang bcud lha yi longs spyod kyis / rgyan (= brgyan) nas dang ra mtsho sman rgyal mo dang / rta sgo lha btsan gtso 'khor bcas la 'bul / khyed rnams thugs dam gnyen (= gnyan) po bskang nas kyang /

(iv) / bstan 'dzin skyes mchog grwa slob 'khor bcas dang / tshogs sbyor sbyin bdag mi nor thams cad la / mi la na tsha ma gtong tshe g.yang spel / phyug (= phyugs) la god kha ma gtong 'phel kha bskyed / zhing la sad ser than 'bu med pa dang / sprin bsdud sbrang char dus su myur 'bebs cing (= shing) / lo legs phyug 'phel mi nor dar rgyas mdzod / mi mthun nad gdon dgra rkun phyir la bzlog /

(v) gzhan yang khyed la mchod pa 'bul ba ni / dmar gyi gtor ma rgyan ldan ri ltar spungs / sman rag ja 'o mtsho ltar skyil ba yis (= yi) / mnyes mchod gsang ba'i mdos chen dam pa 'dis / dang ra'i mtsho sman rgyal mo la sogs te / rta sgo lha btsan gtso 'khor bcas la 'bul / mar me me tog lha sangs (bsangs) tshan chab spos / dkar gsum mngar gsum rin chen 'bru sman dang / rang mthun shing ris nam mkha' rgyang bu dang / mda' 'phang pho tong mo tong brgyan pa yis *** / lha bshos klu bshos dmu bshos btsan bshos dang / bdud bshos la sogs bshos bus brgyan pa yis *** /

(vi) gnam la 'phur dgu bar la 'grims dgu dang / sa la 'dzul dgu gzugs 'gros sna tshogs 'dis *** / mchod 'bul la sogs me tog mdzes pa'i gzugs / rnga gshang dung gling la sogs snyan sgra yis *** / dri zhim spos dang bsang dud sprin ltar 'khrigs / dkar mngar zas kyi mchod pa rab rgyan (brgyan) pa'i *** / stag gzig dbyi spyang dar zab bal tshon dang / yengs med ting 'dzin dgongs pas byin rlabs pas *** / yul sa'i rgyal po dpa' rtsal drag shugs can /

*** The manner in which these objects are given is not specified in the text. The phrasing of these lines suggests that they should be followed by: *Dang-ra mtsho-sman rgyal-mo dang / rta-sgo lha-btsan gtso 'khor bcas*; plus *thugs-dam bskang* (fulfill wishes), *la 'bul* (offer to), or some other appropriate phrase. In the translation, I have opted for: 'we fulfill your wishes'. In the transliteration this interpolation is indicated: ***.

iv) *Gangs-ri lha-btsan*

Gangs-ri lha-btsan is the native protector of the sacred mountain Gangs ti-se/Gangs rin-po-che. Like other important *btsan*, he is in the guise of a fierce warrior surrounded by his vast swarm of helpers and attendants. The main abode of this deity is located above Chos-sku monastery, immediately west of Gangs rin-po-che. Here is his *pho-brang* (palace), a colorful rocky mountain called Za 'og gur-khang (Brocade Tent House). A small tarn near the top of this mountain is his *bla-mtsho* (soul lake). In the various *gsol-kha* texts belonging to the rNying-ma and 'Brug-pa sects dedicated to Gangs-ri lha-btsan, no mention of a consort is made. However, his misogynous tendencies, a not uncommon quality of *btsan* deities, are probably exaggerated. According to what survives of orally-transmitted local lore,

his consort is named Klu-mo mdzes-ldan (Beautiful Female Klu), a deity who perhaps dwells in Ma-pham g.yu-mtsho.

Given the prevailing cultural patterns of *btsan* gods in Upper Tibet, it appears that Gangs-ri lha-btsan was originally an ancestral protector deity of the *yul-lha* class. However, there does not appear to be any Bon literature devoted to him. According to Bon lore, Gangs-dkar ti-se was the *bla-ri* (soul mountain) and mTsho ma-pham the *bla-mtsho* (soul lake) of the Bon of Zhang-zhung (Gangs-ri-ba 1990: 93, 94). This source states that in the time of Tibet's second king Mu-khri btsan-po, who was also a *rgyal-gshen* (royal Bon priest), Ti-se was known as Gangs-gnyan ya-bag sha-ra (*ibid.*: 93, 94). In the *dkar-chag* of Ka-dam ye-shes rgyal-mtshan, it relates that in a vision, the author spoke with the Zhang-zhung era saint Shad-bu ra-khug, who told him that when gShen-rab sung the song of the *gshen* three times on the southwest side of Ti-se, the 300 *lha-bon* of the sky came down like rain and sang and danced before him.[224] At that time, sTon-pa (gShen-rab) gave the name Gangs-dkar ti-se to Gangs-gnyan ya-bag sha-ra and Mal-gros bzi-chen mtsho-mo was named Ma-pang g.yu-mtsho. The same text tells us that Gangs-dkar gnyan gyi ti-se originated from the lineage of the *ma-sangs* and *gnyan*, and was born as the son of 'O-de gung-rgyal (no. 482).

Gangs-ri lha-btsan has become the Buddhist *gnas-bdag* (master of the place) of Gangs rin-po-che and of religious practitioners residing in the area. According to Buddhist tradition, he was conquered by Gu-ru rin-po-che and made to uphold its religious doctrines. This however, has done little to change his angry nature. Easily provoked and fickle in nature, Gangs-ri lha-btsan is thought of as a dangerous ally and an implacable foe. However, when his wrath is harnessed through ritual, such as those conducted by the *lha-pa*, he is believed to bestow material and spiritual boons.

To begin with, let us peruse two short texts belonging to the rNying-ma sect that find resonance in the longer *gsol-kha* of the 'Brug-pa bka' brgyud tradition, which we will examine afterwards. The rNying-ma texts make ample reference to Buddhism, yet they owe their inspiration to both Indian tantric tradition and indigenous culture. In the Bon reckoning of history, they feature offerings and

[224] *Gangs ri mtsho gsum gyi kar (= dkar) chags* by Ka-dam ye-shes rgyal-mtshan (14th century) (*mDzod phug rtsa ba dang spyi don dang gangs ti se'i dkar chag*, nos. 445–489), no. 482.

attributes typical of the *btsan* that are derived from pre-Imperial tradition. The texts are based on a fabric of nine syllables per line. In the first text, a *gsol-kha*,[225] Gangs-ri lha-btsan's appearance and personality is described as awe-inspiring and praiseworthy. This untitled text was written specifically for religious practitioners, but it also addresses more pedestrian concerns related to everyday well being. The age-old themes of a noble guardian of the higher aspects of religion and that of the barbarous *btsan* warrior looking after the immediate concerns of his devotees are entwined throughout, as they are in many *gsol-kha* for mountain divinities.

The *gsol-kha* was designed for use with a second text entitled *Lha btsan bskang ba*,[226] which describes the kinds of gifts that must be offered to Gangs-ri lha-btsan if the ritualist is to win his favor. The second text includes symbolic human anatomical and physiological offerings (para vi), potent gifts that are intended to bring homologous health benefits, as well as spiritual progression in the tantric path (para vi). In the *bsGrags-byang* however, the Bon-po argue that the use of human body parts and secretions is unsuitable for the cult of local deities, which reside in the pure abode (*gtsang-ris kyi lha*) (Karmay 1998: 392). Another peculiar tantric feature is the offering of sexual congress to the deity (para vii). Other offerings of Indian origin are the *bkra-shis rdzas-brgyad* (eight auspicious articles) and the *rgyal-srid sna-bdun* (seven instruments of royal dominion). On the other hand, a number of recorded offerings in the text can probably be traced to indigenous tradition, such as weapons, livestock and an ensign. These twin Gangs-ri lha-btsan texts embody the standard ritual regime of remuneration for work carried out, which is characteristic of mountain deity propitiation, including that represented by the invocations and activities of the *lha-pa*:

> (i) *Kyai*! Praises to you supercilious great [Gangs-ri] lha-btsan, the performer of the activities of the oath-holders, the one who unwaveringly reveres the excellent victorious [Buddhist] Doctrine, the source of benefit and happiness, present in both [worldly] existence and liberation. Praises to you who are like the white silk regimental flag fixed

[225] This is a hand-written (in *dbu-med* script) manuscript of one folio, which I collected from an elderly *sngags-pa* residing near Gangs rin-po-che. In the text no authorship is assigned.

[226] Collected from the same source as the companion text. It consists of a single folio hand-written in the *dbu-can* script. The author is not recorded.

on the peak of existence.[227] You possess a brilliant ruddy complexion and a smiling manner. Praises to you who has fine eyes that have eyebrows [like the curve] of a taunt bow, which watch over practitioners as one who protects a son.

(ii) When you face the furious enemy you are a fierce savage, blood-colored, fangs bared, and with a yellow pick-ax.[228] Praises to you who is unbearable in appearance and mounted on a wild red horse; the thruster of the red spear towards the enemy. Praises and offerings to you great master of Dharma. Protect the victorious [Buddhist] doctrine and exalt the stature of the Triple Gems.[229] Realize the objects of our desire and those of the circle of practitioners, and the activities of a pacific, expanding, conquering and wrathful nature.[230]

(iii) *Hung*![231] You, the great master of the Ti-se palace, are red in color with blood red hair. Praises to you, the great, miraculous, wrathful, fierce, fearsome one of angry behavior, who slaughters the blighters. You are the *sde-dpon* (division commander) of all of the very wild haughty ones. You wear a brocade cape, a good helmet[232] and are clad in *sag-lham*.[233] Baring your teeth you look at the enemy with your three eyes. Praises to you, who by tremendous force is the conqueror of demons and obstructers.

(iv) You race around like the wind riding a great and powerful red horse. With the red spear in your right hand you pierce the hearts of the enemies. With the lasso in your left hand you strangle the oath-breakers. Praises to you destroyer of the malevolent ones. The three planes of existence are full of the circle [of deities] like [Lha] btsan himself. By your fierce power you guard the [Buddhist] doctrine. You conquered the host of demons, and always protect the places of solitude. Praises to you *dgra-lha* of us, the adepts!

Lha btsan bskang ba
(v) *Kyai!* With the pure elements of the solemn oath we fulfill the wishes of the goodly protector of the white quarter who has tremendous

[227] Symbolizes the deity's dominance over the entire world.
[228] *Ya-lad.* Apparently, a word of Zhang-zhung origin. In Tibetan a pick-ax is called *'jor-bu*.
[229] dKon-mchog [gsum] are the three pillars of Buddhism: *Sangs-rgyas* (Buddha), *Dam-chos* (Dharma), *dGe 'dun* (Religious Community).
[230] These are the *'phrin-las-bzhi*, the Indian tradition of four types of activities from which both worldly and spiritual things are attained.
[231] Mystic word used to enforce the requests/demands of the ritualist.
[232] Perhaps 'copper helmet' (*zangs-rmog*) is intended here?
[233] A kind of Tibetan ornamental boot made of hide with appliqué designs used by deities and dignitaries.

power, is unbearable to behold, can go everywhere, and who is circled by an assembly of one hundred thousand *lha-btsan* members. We fulfill the wishes of the ocean of tiger-clad heroes[234] with a golden pick, a shield resembling a circular rainbow, an array of weapons that look like the greatness of the gShin-rje (Lord of Death),[235] and the playing of musical instruments resembling the thunder of celestial iron, etc. We fulfill the wishes of the ocean of tiger-arrayed heroes with a wild red horse as swift as the wind and well decorated with various types of jeweled ornaments, excellent livestock, herds of sheep that are the source of many desires, and the one hundred thousand types of wealth and animals of existence.

(vi) *Hung*! It was predicted by many past Buddhas that [Gangs-ri] lha-btsan and his circle would be the protector of the Great Snow Mountain,[236] Ma-dros[237] and the mountain of sPos-ngad-ldan,[238] as well as various other holy practice places of solitude. We fulfill the wishes of Lha-btsan, he who protects, and his retinue by *dza-gad* (consecrated beverages),[239] *gser-skyems* (libations), the three white foods, the three sweets, meat,[240] blood, various grains, sacred cakes,[241] the eight auspicious articles, the seven instruments of royal dominion,[242] and the collection of many other things you desire. We fulfill your wishes with kinds of blood, blood offerings,[243] the blossom of the senses,[244] the fumes of incense made from human fat, a lamp of melted human

[234] *dPa' bo stag-chas rgya-mtsho.* This refers to Gangs-ri lha-btsan and his very large retinue equipped with the costume, weapons and other martial implements of male warriors.
[235] gShin-rje is both a proper name and one designating a class of deities associated with death. See Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956: 82–87.
[236] Gangs-chen. Denotes Gangs-dkar ti-se (Mount Kailas).
[237] mTsho ma-pham/mTsho ma-pang/Ma-pang g.yu-mtsho/Ma-pham g.yu-mtsho (Lake Manasarovar).
[238] Sacred mountain twenty kilometers east of mTsho ma-pham featuring prominently in Bon accounts of the history of Zhang-zhung.
[239] *Dza-gad.* Liquid offerings such as beer. This word appears to be of Zhang-zhung origin.
[240] *Mang-sa.* This word has a Sanskrit etymology.
[241] *Bha-ling-ta.* A term perhaps of Sanskrit origin, which is the equivalent of *gtor-ma*.
[242] The *bkra-shis rdzas-brgyad* are an Indian ritual tradition and include: *me-long*, *gi-wang* (medicinal concretions from deer and other animals), *zho* (yogurt), *rtswa-durba* (a precious type of grass), *li-khri* (vermilion), *shing-tog bil-ba* (wood apple), *dung-dkar g.yas 'khyil* (conch shell with clockwise whorls), and *nyungs-dkar* (white mustard seeds). See para v of the *Lha chen rta sgo'i mchod bskang* text (pp. 230, 231) for an enumeration of the *rgyal-srid sna-bdun*.
[243] This is the contextual meaning of *Argha*, a word of Sanskrit origin. Sanskrit *argha* means 'respectful reception of guests'.
[244] Apparently this designates the symbolic tantric offering to wrathful protectors of a human heart, nose, ears, eyes and tongue, which are presented in a human skull-cap.

fat, gall, urine, the life-force, the breath,[245] [other] various edibles, the sound of the *rkang-gling* (human thigh-bone trumpet) and other musical instruments.

(vii) We fulfill your wishes by a swift red horse, yaks, sheep, birds, dogs, oxen,[246] various fierce terrestrial carnivores, sharp-edged weapons, impervious armor, an ocean of offerings for visual pleasure, and the great flag of the solemn oath support.[247] A young woman who provides the glorious bliss of sexual union, beautiful ornaments, clothes, songs, dance; take whatever you want for your pleasure. In pursuance, perform my activities completely. Recite whatever expressions are in your mind[248]

Transliteration of the Gangs-ri lha-btsan gsol-kha

(i) kyai / phan bde'i 'byung gnas rgyal ba'i bstan pa mchog / srid zhur (= zhir) 'gying la gus pa'i (= pa) mi lhod pa'i / bstan 'dzin rnams kyi 'phrin las sgrub byed pa'i / dregs pa'i lha btsan chen po khyod la bstod / dar dkar ru mtshon srid pa'i rtser sgring (= sgreng) zhin (= bzhin) / dkar gsal dmar ba'i mdangs ldan 'dzum pa'i nyams / smin ma gzhu 'geng rab chags spyan ras kyis / sgrub pa bu bzhin skyong mdzad khyod la bstod /

(ii) ma rung (= rungs) dgra bor khro gtum rngam pa'i tshe / khrag mdog mche gtsigs ser bas (= ba'i) ya lad can / mi zad (= bzad) rta rgod dmar po la chibs nas / mdung dmar dgra bor bsnun mdzad khyod la bstod / chos bdag chen po khyod la mchod bstod do / rgyal ba'i bstan bsrung (= srungs) dkon mchog dbu 'phang bstod / bdag cag 'khor dang bcas pa 'dod pa'i don / zhi rgyas dbang drag 'phrin las khyod kyis sgrub (= sgrubs) /

(iii) hung / pho brang ti se'i gnas bdag chen po ni / sku mdog dmar po khrag gi ral pa can / khro rngam 'jig (= 'jigs) pa'i drag

[245] These symbolic offerings of human fat, human by-products and the basis of human life are derived from tantric tenets. In general terms, when offered to tutelary deities, these symbolize the process of spiritual transformation, but in this context they appear to represent a kind of magical empowerment.
[246] *Glang.* Alternatively, an elephant.
[247] *Thug-dam dar-chen rten.* This may be a reference to the ritual application of the *ru-dar* (regimental flag) used in Upper Tibet as symbol of clan and community unity since antiquity.
[248] This last line illustrates the customary practice of successive ritualists elaborating upon recitations to the mountain deities.

shul rdzu 'phrul che / gnod byed sgrol ba'i btsan rgod khyod la bstod / dreg (= dregs) pa mi srin (= srun) yongs kyi sde dpon khyod / za 'og ber gsol bzang rmog sag lham gyon / mche ba gtsigs shing spyan gsum dgra la gzigs / mthu stobs gdon bgegs 'jom mdzad khyod la bstod /

(iv) shugs chen rta dmar bcib nas rlung ltar rgyug / phyag g.yas mdung dmar dgra bo'i snying la bsnun / g.yon gyi zhags pas dam nyams sked (= ske) nas bcing / ma rung (= rungs) rdul du brlog (= rlog) mdzad khyod la bstod / rang 'dra'i bstan gyi 'khor tshogs srid gsum btams (= gtams) / rngams (rngam) pa'i stobs kyis bstan pa'i bya ra mdzad / bdud dpung bcoms nas dben gnas rtag tu bsrung / rnal 'byor bdag gi dgra lha khyod la bstod /

Transliteration of the Lha btsan bskang ba *text*

(v) Kyai / dkar po'i phyogs rnams legs par skyongs mdzad pa'i / dregs pa'i lha btsan 'bum sde tshogs kyis bskor / cir yang rgyu ba'i mthu btsal (= rtsal) bzod dka' ba'i / dam tshig gtsang ma'i rdzas kyi (kyis) thugs dam bskang / gser gyi ya lad mja' (= 'ja') tshon khyil (= 'khyil) 'dra'i phub / gshin rje'i che ba lta bur rgyu mtshon dang / gnam lcags thog 'dre'i (= 'dra'i) sgra ldan rnams bsdud (= bsdus) bcas / dpa' bo stag chas rgya mtshos (= mtsho'i) thugs dam bskang / rlung ltar mgyogs pa'i rta rgod dmar po la / rin chen sna tshogs rgyan gyis legs brgyan zhing / khyu mchog 'dod dgu'i 'byung gnas lug khyu sogs / srid pa'i dkor nor 'bum sde'i (= sdes) / thugs dam bskang /

(vi) hung / 'das pa'i sangs rgyas mang po'i (= pos) lung bstan pa'i / gangs chen ma dros spos ngad ldan pa'i ri / khyad par dbyen (= dben) pa'i sgrub gnas dam pa sogs / bsrung (= srung) skyob byed pa'i lha btsan 'khor bcas la / dza gad gser skyems dkar gsum mngar gsum dang / mam (= mang) sa rakta 'bru sna ba (= bha) ling ta / bkra shis rdzas brgyad rgyal srid sna bdun sogs / khrom chen 'dod dgu 'dzoms pa'i (= pas) thugs dam bskang / khrag sna'i Argha dbang po'i me tog dang / tshil chen sdug (= bdug) spos zhun chen snang gsal dang / mkhris pa'i (= pa) dri chab srog dbug (= dbugs) zhal zas sogs / rkang gling rol mo sgra 'di (= 'dis) thugs dam bskang /

(vii) mgyogs pa'i rta dmar g.yag lug bya khyi glang / btum (= gtum) pa'i can (= gcan) zan sna tshogs rno ba'i mtshon / sra ba'i go cha spyan gzigs rgya mtsho sogs / thug dam dar chen rten gyi (= gyis)

thugs dam bskang / zag bcas dbe ba'i dpal der (= ster) na chung ma / mdzes pa'i rgyan gos glu gar la sogs pa / so so'i thugs la dgyes pa bzhes nas kyang / bdag gi 'phrin las ma lus sgrub par mdzod / gang zhig yid la dran pa brjod /

The 'Brug-pa bka' brgyud *gsol-kha* is entitled *Quickly Bestowing the Objects of Our Desires gSol-kha of the Master of the Sacred Place Gangs-ri Lha-btsan.*[249] The meter, description of Lha-btsan and the constituents of the offering regimen (paras v, vi) of this text are in close correspondence with the rNying-ma works above, indicating that they sprang from a common literary or oral tradition. However, the rNying-ma Lha-btsan texts contain a higher proportion of archaic words and imagery, and the tone of the verses are more along the lines of the bardic and Bon traditions, suggesting that they were the predecessors of the 'Brug-pa text. In any event, the 'Brug-pa *gsol-kha* was not written before the first half of the 17th century, as demonstrated by the inclusion of Ngag-dbang phyogs-las rnam-par rgyal-ba (1594–?1651), the unifier of the Bhutanese state.[250]

The 'Brug-pa *gsol-kha* is largely a sectarian affair, in which the Buddhist doctrine and the well-being of its monks and leaders are paramount. The Buddhist appropriation and taming of Gangs-ri lha-btsan described in the text represent the cultural ideal that many of the spirit-mediums aspire to, as does the general Buddhist population. The 'Brug-pa *gsol-kha* begins with an invitation to Gangs-ri lha-btsan and his circle of attendants (para i). They are asked not to diverge from the Buddhist oath that was given to them by august figures of the religion, and they are presented with the flesh and blood offerings of the wrathful protectors (para ii). The *gtor-ma* in the ritual are transformed into a metaphor for the fundamental character of all phenomena, *stong-pa nyid* (emptiness) (para iii). In conjunction with the presentation of the *gtor-ma*, prostrations are made to the Buddha, who has five different appellations in the text (para iii). This type of content represents the Buddhist stylistic phase in

[249] *Gangs ri'i gnas bdag lha btsan gyi gsol kha 'dod don myur ster.* This four folio text in the *dbu-can* script has no colophon. However, it's author may be the same as the one who wrote the one folio text to Jag-pa me-len appended to the end of it, 'Jig-bral ye-shes rdo-rje. It was obtained at 'Go-tshug monastery, on the west shore of Ma-pham g.yu-mtsho.

[250] Zhabs-drung ngag-dbang rnam-rgyal. He was the 18th 'Brug-pa hierarch who fled to Bhutan in 1616. His translated biography is found in Aris 1980, pp. 203–242.

the literature for indigenous deities, whereby it is used as a platform for the active dispensation of Buddhist religious tradition. In general, this doctrinal interpenetration reflects an actual strengthening, or a pretension to the fortification, of Buddhism's grip on this genius loci.

Once the *gtor-ma* are sanctified by the Buddha himself they are handed over to the deity (paras iii, iv). Given the capricious nature of Gangs-ri lha-btsan, he must again be reminded of his oath before his services are enlisted by the propagators of Buddhism (para iv). The description of Lha-btsan is found in his *bstod-pa* (praises) section of the text (para v), and his collection of presents in the *bskang-ba* (servicing the deity) section (paras vi, vii). The text concludes with simple sectarian requests for success (para vii). Appended on the end of the *gsol-kha* are instructions for making the Lha-btsan *gtor-ma* (para viii):

> (i) *Hung!* Among all your sacred places, particularly the rock formation Za 'og gur-khang (Brocade Tent Abode) is the master of Gangs-can (Tibet), in the center of the world. You are the protectors of the [Buddhist] Doctrine, the assembly of terrific workers and butchers. At this excellent place we have actually arranged and imagined offerings. We call you, please come Lha-btsan with your circle. Ride a miraculous horse as quick as lightning. Do not delay, come here quickly. *Badzra sa ma' ya dza.*[251]

> (ii) Administering oath: successively, in front of He-ru-ka,[252] Padma 'byung (Gu-ru rin-po-che) and bZhad-pa rdo-rje (Mi-la ras-pa) you took the oath, so do not waver. Carry out the activities entrusted to you. Offerings: *Hung dza ya.* We give offerings to the great Lha-btsan and your circles according to your preference. We give you all the offering articles of marvellous existence, the quintessence of forms, sounds, fragrances, tastes, and sensations. We present to you the offerings of the *dza-gad* of heroes, the flesh and blood of enemies, *bshos* ornamented with the blood and flesh of elephants, horses and enemies; and the entire spectrum of desirous objects and pleasures of gods and men. Carry out the four activities. As you promised and vowed earlier, protect the holy men, holders of the Doctrine of the Buddha and particularly us, the yogis. Conquer every blighter, enemy and obstructer.

[251] Sanskrit mantra commanding the deities to come with their adamantine obligation to Buddhism.

[252] Wrathful manifestation of the tantric god bDe-mchog, who has as a residence Gangs ti-se. He-ru-ka often administers the Buddhist oath to members of the indigenous pantheon.

(iii) Presentation of *gtor-ma*: Purify with *swa bha wa*. Envision without the contrivance of the mind that the *gtor-ma* ingredients have become emptiness. From the sphere of emptiness [envision] that the stainless *gtor-ma* have become the ocean of the nectar of wisdom inside the wide and spacious jeweled container of the *gtor-ma*. Repeat three times: *Om A hung*. We prostrate to Rin-chen mang (Many Jewels), the Victorious One who has passed beyond. We prostrate to gZugs-mdzes dam-pa (Holy Beautiful Form). We prostrate to sKu 'byam klas (Limitless Body). We prostrate to 'Jigs-pa 'tham-cad yongs-su bral-ba (He Who is Completely Free from All Fears).[253]

(iv) This is the offering *gtor-ma* that gratifies the desires of the five senses, which is offered to Gangs-ri lha-btsan rdo-rje 'bar-ba (Blazing Adamantine Snow Mountain Lha-btsan) himself and his retinue who reside at gNas-chen gangs-ri mtsho-gsum. Please receive it and do not pass beyond the bounds of the oath of the glorious He-ru-ka, Slob-dpon Padma 'byung-gnas and rJe-btsun bzhad-pa rdo-rje. Generally protect the doctrine of the Buddha and exalt the stature of the dKon-mchog (Buddha). Extend the lives of the lamas. Protect the orders of the monks, and especially carry out the actions of quickly conquering all the obstructers and enemies who harm and damage us the yogis, the religious teachers, the benefactors, and all of our circles.

(v) Praises: *Hung*! You have a blood [red] color, blood [red] hair, and are terrifyingly fierce. You have one head and two hands. In your right hand you hold a red spear. In your left hand you grasp a lasso. You ride a red horse with a white face. You wear a brocade *ber* (cape) and are clad in *zab-chen* (embroidered satin) boots. You are the great leader of all the divisions of haughty and savage ones. Manifestations like yourself are dancing in the three planes of existence. We praise you and your retinue, destroyers of the enemy where not even their names are left.

(vi) Servicing [the deities]: *Hung*! Gangs-can, Ma-dros (Ma-pham g.yu-mtsho) and sPos-ri ngad-ldan in the northern direction of the world were prophesized by the Victorious One. We fulfill your wishes by libations, blood, *tshogs, gtor* [ma]. We fulfill your wishes by erected flags, swift red horses, red yaks, red elephants, red goats, red sheep, red birds, red dogs, sharp weapons, impervious armor, the *dza-gad* of the heroes, and all the desired ingredients of the *rten* (tabernacle). We fulfill your wishes by:

The blossom of the senses of the oath-breakers,
An arrangement of human fat incense,

[253] This is followed by three lines of mantras repeated three times.

a lamp of human grease and oblation bowls of gall,
zhal-zas (type of edible *gtor-ma*) of the life-force and breath,
the sound of the *rkang-gling* musical instrument,
and a large *ba-ling*[254] of (meat).[255]

(vii) We fulfill your wishes as you prefer by the three sweets, three white foods, whatever things you need, the outer, inner and secret categories of offerings, things for eating and drinking, and whatever else is possible. May we fulfill the wishes of Lha-btsan and his circle. Propagate like the waxing moon, the seat of the religion and government of Ngag-dbang phyogs-las rnam-par rgyal-ba. Accomplish the wishes of we the ritualists and benefactors and our circles.

(viii) The *gtor-ma* of Lha-btsan is triangular with a [snake] ornament winding around it in a clockwise direction. On its front side, near the base, are four incised x-marks, two on both the left and right sides. The [spaces] between these marks is ornamented by *mtheb-kyu*.[256] [The *gtor-ma*] is also ornamented by meat and blood.

Transliteration of the 'Dod don myur ster *text*

(i) 'dzam gling lte ba gangs can bdag po ste / gnas dang zhing rnams khyed kyi yul kun dang / khyad par brag ri za 'og gur khang nas / bstan srung 'jigs byed las mkhan bshan pa'i tshogs / dngos bshams yid sprul mchod ba'i gnas mchog 'dir / 'bod kyis lha btsan 'khor bcas gshegs su gsol / glog ltar myur ba'i rdzu 'phrul rtar chibs te / ma thogs myur ba'i tshul gyis 'dir gshegs shig / badzra sa mā ya dza /

(ii) dam bzhag ni / he ru ka dang padma 'byung / bzhad pa rdo rje'i spyan snga ru / rim bzhin dam bcas ma g.yel bar / bcol ba'i 'phrin las sgrub par mdzod / mchod pa ni / hung dza ya / lha btsan chen po 'khor dang bcas rnams la / ji ltar mnyes pa'i mchod rdzas 'bul ba ni / gzugs sgra dri ro rig (= reg) bya phun tshogs par / srid na mtshar ba'i dngos kun mchod par 'bul / dgra bo'i dmar chen dpa' bo'i dza gad dang / brgyan bshos dgra dang rta glang dmar sha'i tshogs / lha mi'i 'dod yon ci dgu ma lus pa / mchod bar 'bul la 'phrin las rnam bzhi sgrub / ji ltar sngon gyi khas blangs

[254] Spelling as in the text. A kind of *gtor-ma*.
[255] *Mā-sa*. Spelling as in the text.
[256] Small sculptures made by squeezing pieces of dough between the thumb and index finger. Also spelled *mtheb-skyu* (Tshig-mdzod chen-mo: 1217).

dam bcas ltar / sangs rgyas bstan dang de 'dzin skyes bu rnams / bsrung zhing lhag par rnal 'byor bdag cag gi / gnod byed dgra bgegs ma lus 'dzoms par mdzod /

(iii) gtor bsngos ni / swa bha was sbyangs / gtor rdzas rnams mi dmigs te stong pa nyid du gyur / stong ba'i ngang las gtor snod rin po che'i snod yangs shing rgya che ba'i nang du / gtor ma zag pa med pa ye shes kyi / bdud rtsi'i rgya mtsho chen po gyur / Om A hung / lan gsum / bcom ldan 'das de bzhin gshegs pa rin chen mang la phyag 'tshal lo / gzugs mdzes dam pa la phyag 'tshal lo / sku 'byam klas la phyag 'tshal lo / 'jigs pa thams cad yongs su bral ba la phyag 'tshal lo /

(iv) mchod sbyin gyi gtor ma 'dod pa'i yon tan lnga dang ldan pa 'di nyid / gnas chen gangs ri mtsho gsum la gnas pa'i lha btsan rdo rje 'bar ba dpon g.yog 'khor dang bcas pa rnams la 'bul lo / 'di bzhes la (= dpal) he ru ka dang slob dpon padma 'byung gnas rje btsun bzhad pa rdo rje'i bka' dang dam las mi 'da' bar spyir sangs rgyas kyi bstan pa srungs / dkon mchog gi dbu 'phangs bstod / bla ma'i sku tshe srings / dge 'dun gyi sde skyong khyad par du rnal 'byor pa bdag cag dpon slob yon mchod 'khor dang bcas pa rnams la gnod cing 'tshe bar byed pa'i dgra bgegs thams cad myur du sgrol ba'i 'phrin las mdzad du gsol /

(v) bstod pa ni / hung / khrag mdog khro rngam khrag gi ral pa can / zhal gcig phyag gnyis g.yas pa mdung dmar bsnams / g.yon pa zhags bzung zhur can rta dmar chibs / za 'og ber gsol zab chen sag lham gyon / dregs pa mi srun yongs kyi sde dpon che / srid gsum rang 'dra'i sprul pas gar mdzad de / dgra bo ma lus mịng tsam lhag med du / gtong bar byed pa 'khor dang bcas la bstod /

(vi) bskangs gso ni / hung rgyal bas lung btsan 'dzam gling byang phyogs na / gangs can ma dros spos ngad ldan ri'i bdag / lha btsan 'khor dang bcas la gser skyems dang / rakta tshogs gtor bcas kyi thugs dam bskangs / 'phyar ba'i dar dang mgyogs pa'i rta g.yag glang / ra lug bya khyi dmar po rno ba'i mtshon / sra ba'i go cha dpa' bo'i dza gad dang / rten rdzas 'dod dgu'i tshogs kyi thugs dam bskangs / nyams ba'i dbang po'i me tog tshil chen spos / zhun chen snang gsal mkhris pa'i dri chab 'khrigs / srog dbugs zhal zas rkang gling rol mo'i sgra / mā sa'i ba ling chen pos thugs dam bskangs /

(vii) dkar gsum mngar gsum mkho dgu'i yo byad sogs / phyi nang gsang gsum mchod pa'i bye brag rnams / bza' dang btung ba'i yo byad ji snyed kyis / so so'i thugs la ci dgyes thugs dam bskangs / lha btsan 'khor bcas thugs dam bskang mdzod la / ngag dbang phyogs las rnam par rgyal bstan / chos srid yar ngo'i zla bzhin rgyas pa dang / mchod yon 'khor bcas bsam don 'grub par mdzod /

(viii) lha btsan gyi gtor ma zur gsum sbrul ching sbrul mgo g.yas sbrul 'jug g.yon 'khor mdun du bzhi g.yas g.yon du gnyis gnyis gri gram gnyis ldan bar du mthebs kyus (= mtheb skyu) brgyan pa dang sha khrag gis brgyan par byo'o /

v) *bTsan-rgod Nam-ra*

Nam-ra is one of the most powerful *yul-lha* in the eastern Byang-thang. His home is a black mountain in the 40 kilometer-long mountain range of the same name, in Bar-tha township, Nag-chu. At 5700 meters, Nam-ra is the tallest peak watering the valleys and plains of Bar-tha. The meaning of his archaic name has been lost. In a text containing short *gsol-kha* texts to the environment-bound protectors of Nor-bu khyung rdzong monastery, located at the foot of Nam-ra, there is an invocation for this deity authored by the 14th Karma-pa rGyal-dbang theg-pa mchog rdo-rje (1798–1868).[257] Subsidiary to Thang-lha, Nam-ra is beseeched to provide his devotees with all manner of worldly benefits and successes. This text succinctly sums up the functions of the mountain protectors as typified in all types of religious practices:

> The invocations and offerings of the *btsan* king Nam-ra: *Kyai*! The great god of existence, protector of the countryside, who is in the excellent

[257] This text for Nam-ra is found on the first folio of *Nor bu khyung rdzong dgon gyi bstan srung rnams kyis* (= *kyi*) *gsol mchod phrin las myur 'grub zhes* (= *ces*) *bya ba bzhugs so* (Jewel Khyung Castle Monastery Offerings and Invocations to the Protectors of the Doctrine for the Rapid Accomplishment of Activities) (5 folios). The colophon reads: "These words, on behalf of the *sngags-pa* bKra-rgyal, are the blessed speech of the [living] Buddha, the 14th Theg-pa mchog gi rdo-rje." (*ces pa 'di sngags [pa] bkra rgyal gyi ngor rgyal dbang bcu bzhi pa theg pa mchog gi rdo rje'i gsung byin rlabs can no*). I obtained a copy of this text at Nor-bu Khyung rdzong monastery, Bar-tha township, Nag-chu county.

circle of the *gnyan* Thang-lha, is Nam-ra, the great wild btsan of the red slates. With your circle please come here and stay happily. We give for your acceptance an ocean of bountiful offerings. Pacify all tangible harm to the benefactors and practitioners. Increase our life, merit, dominance and wealth. Always bestow happiness and good luck upon us. Forgive us for all our errors caused by our coming under impious influences. Bestow whatever we desire, all belongings and abundant wealth. Accomplish the four activities.

Transliteration of 14th Karma-pa's invocation to Nam-ra

btsan rgyal nam ra'i gsol mchod ni / kyai / yul skyong srid pa'i lha chen po / thang lha gnyen (= gnyan) gyi bka' 'khor mchog / nam ra g.ya' dmar btsan rgod che / 'khor bcas 'dir byon dgyes par bzhugs / mchod sprin rgya mtsho 'bul gyis bzhes / yon mchod mi nor 'khor bcas la / nyer 'tshe ma lus zhi ba dang / tshe bsod mnga' thang 'byor ba rgyas / rnam kun dge bas bkra shis stsol / bag med dbang gyur nongs pa'i tshogs / bzod par bzhes la ci 'dod pa'i / dngos kun 'byor ba'i dpal stsol cig / rnam bzhi'i phrin las 'grub par mdzod /

The second Nam-ra text we will examine is attributed to the great 'Bri-gung-pa hierarch sKyob-pa 'jig-rten mgon-po (1143–1217) and is entitled The *Obedient Great Black One.*[258] This *gsol-kha* composition squarely belongs to the Buddhist tradition, but was written in the fashion characteristic of the intermediate stylistic phase of ritual literature—heavily borrowing from the ancient bardic tradition. Most of the verses were composed with seven syllables to a line to maintain the standard meter and cadence, investing them with the rhythmic structure of the ancient *bsangs* hymns. 'Jig-rten mgon-po made lavish use of trisyllabic indicators to vividly describe the awe-inspiring appearances and sounds of Nam-ra and his circle of warrior *btsan.* This text was not written in a historical void, and it is likely that the author relied heavily on pre-existing lore that had developed around Nam-ra.

From the first paragraph onwards, we find expression of one of the main themes of the text: the power of Nam-ra to slaughter those who have broken their religious vows. Authors, to spell out the grim

[258] *Nag po chen po bka' nyan zhes bya ba bzhugs so.* The name of sKyob-pa 'jig-rten mgon-po appears at the end of the text. My manuscript copy of nine folios came from the spirit-medium Pho-bo lha-dbang. It contains quite a few *skung-yig* (conjunctions) but for the sake of clarity each word is written out in the transliteration.

fate awaiting apostates and the enemies of bona fide religion, frequently exploit the changeful, often violent personalities of the mountain deities. Seen as a mechanism of social control, the cult of mountain deities became an important instrument over the centuries for maintaining the dominance of both Bon and Buddhism.

The text begins with *stong-pa'i ngang* (sphere of emptiness) as the Buddhist phenomenological basis for Nam-ra and the ensemble of offerings he is to receive (paras i, ii). The text instructs the ritualist to read the invocations while playing musical instruments, a customary practice (para iii). Drums, conch shells and *gshang* are the most common instruments in these types of liturgies, precisely the instruments most commonly used by the spirit-mediums. As we shall see in Part Five, according to Bon tradition, the usage of such musical instruments arose in the pre-Imperial period. 'Jig-rten mgon-po affirms the native mytheme of the dyadic *lha* and *srin* giving rise to beings, in this case Nam-ra (para iii). The father of Nam-ra is a *lha*, and his mother a *srin*, spirits of the celestial realm and underworld respectively. The primary names of Nam-ra's five brothers and sisters indicate that these are also part of an archaic indigenous tradition, while their 'secret names' are Buddhist appellations (paras iii, iv). The use of such appellations is a common doctrinal stratagem for maintaining indigenous deities within the fold of Buddhism. The text also notes the consort of Nam-ra, a deity named Glog-mo brag-dkar. The *lha* and *srin* are clearly placed in the context of deities who once existed outside the auspices of Buddhism when the details of their oaths are given (para v). Among the oath-givers noted in the text is the shepherd Shakya' sengge who from his relative temporal position, must have lived sometime between 800 and 1100.

'Jig-rten mgon-po deftly employs a large variety of trisyllabic indicators to describe Nam-ra's palace, mounts, and circle of spirits (paras vi, vii, ix, xx, xxi). These serve to animate the descriptions with the vitality and poignancy that appear to have typified the ancient bardic utterances. These kinds of embellished verses have a bold directness that is probably not matched in the Sanskritic tradition of poetics. Nam-ra is attired as a heroic warrior (para viii). According to Bon tradition, his *stag-dong* (tiger-skin quiver) and *gzig-shub* (leopard-skin bow case) in particular, are elements of the pre-Imperial warrior. As is customary, Nam-ra's retinue includes fierce carnivorous animals (para ix). This helps to explain why when such animals as wolves, wild dogs, lynx, and snow leopards cause damage to the *'brog-pa*

herds it is often believed that the owners have somehow angered the mountain divinities. A variety of mountain deities in the circle of Nam-ra are invoked, most or all of which have names that reflect a native etymology (paras x–xii). Next, Nam-ra and his entourage are presented with the offerings of the ritual (para xiii). This is followed by exhortations to remember their Buddhist oaths (para xiv). Interestingly, the text tells us that Gu-ru rin-po-che magically made a *lha-g.yag dkar-po* (divine white yak) the *phyi-rten* (outer support; an entity in which the deity resides) of Nam-ra (para xiv), a derivative of antecedent tradition.

The Obedient Great Black One specifies the presents that Nam-ra is offered (para xv). They are of the type we are already familiar with from other texts. In the next paragraphs, Nam-ra has four daily manifestations based on the *'phrin-las* plan (paras xvi–xix). These reflect the quality of light at various times in a 24–hour period.[259] Probably in order to strengthen the deity's Buddhist credentials, the author relates that Nam-ra went repeatedly to India and is known to roam around sandalwood forests (paras xx, xxii). Savage mountain deities, by their very nature, are the most tenuous members of the Buddhist pantheon and need constant reminding of their oaths and commitments. Yet, despite this inherent doctrinal uncertainty regarding the loyalty of mountain deities, 'Jig-rten mgon-po was both confident and truthful enough to assert that Nam-ra is also a Bon deity in his aspect as a *zhang-blon*, an important group of ministers in the time of the Yar-lung kings (para xxiii).[260] It must be noted that a Bon-po enclave is still found in Bar-tha. Following this disclosure Nam-ra is reminded to uphold the three main Buddhist oaths he took (para xxiv).

Nam-ra is referred to by the term *jo-bo* (big brother) on two occasions (paras xxii, xxiii). This implies that the mountain had a genealogical relationship with human beings. However, by the time this text was composed in the 12th or 13th century, such native traditions (probably based on clan mythology) were already in a state of decline. To bring the ritual to completion there is the *dngos-grub* (consum-

[259] For a discussion of this subject see Bellezza 1997, pp. 114, 115.

[260] It is interesting to note that 'Jig-rten mgon-po may have been the first Buddhist philosopher to systematically examine and reject Bon tenets (Khangsar Tulku: 1). Dan Martin, in personal communication, has pointed out that his followers accumulated the stories told in the anti-Bon polemic from around 1260.

mation) stage where the capability for the usual personal and worldly boons is requested (para xxv). Nam-ra's role in providing a healthy, wealthy and long life—key functions on which the spirit-mediums depend—are clearly spelled out:

> (i) Purify with emptiness with *Om swa bha.*[261] From the sphere of emptiness, behold in front of yourselves the quintessence of all that could be desired, the great ocean of the flesh and blood of the slaughtered oath-breakers, *gtor-ma*, smell and taste [offerings], and nectar. Repeat three times: *Om A Hung. Om swa bha was sbyangs stong pa nyid gyur.*[262]
>
> (ii) From the sphere of emptiness, in the brave house of the *gnyan*, is Nam-ra of the north. Great king of the *gnod-sbyin* you have a red-colored body, one head and two arms. In your right hand you hold a red banner aloft in the sky. In your left hand, you have a multi-colored lasso of the *btsan* held with the little finger and index finger extended and the two middle fingers pressed into the palm.[263] You wear a three layered golden *'jol-ber.*[264] You ride a tawny horse with tiger [stripe] legs. The earth and space are full of your manifestations and outer manifestations. You, too, remember your oath of ancient times. This is the place of offerings. *Badzra sa ma ya' dza.*[265]
>
> (iii) With the sound of musical instruments say: *Hung*! The great black servant is the *lha-btsan* protector of the north, the *btsan king* Nam-ra. Your father is a *lha* and your mother a *srin.* There are five brothers and sisters, powerful manifestations of the *lha* and *srin.* The *lha-btsan* has been given a name. You are that one who is called Lha-btsan dkar-po. Yes, you have also been given a secret name. You are called rDo-rje skyes-chen (Great Adamantine Man). rDo-rje skyes-chen come with your oath. The younger brother has been given a name. You are that one who is called Sri-tsa dmar-po. Yes, you have also been given a secret name. You are called rDo-rje grags-skyong (Adamantine Famous Protector). rDo-rje grags-skyong come with your oath. The attendant has also been given a name. You are the one called g.Yu yi rtag-ri (Turquoise Unchanging Mountain). Yes, you have also been given a secret name. You are that one who is called rDo-rje skyes-cig (Exclusive Adamantine Man). rDo-rje skyes-cig come with your oath.

[261] Mantra at onset of the ritual for the purification of the venue and ritual objects.

[262] Spellings as in the text. Purification mantra that acknowledges that all phenomena are characterized by emptiness.

[263] *rDig-mdzub.* A wrathful hand sign.

[264] A kind of robe similar to those worn by ancient Chinese kings. It has very wide sleeves.

[265] A Sanskrit mantra (*vajra samâya ja*) signaling the deity to come with his oath.

(iv) The divine lady has been given a name. You are that one who is called Glog-mo brag-dkar (White Rock Lightning Lady). Yes, you have also been given a secret name. You are called rDo-rje gangs-rum sman cig (Adamantine Mountain Womb Exclusive sMan). Gangs-rum sman-cig come with your oath. The younger sister has been given a name. You are that one who is called Brag-nag g.ya' khra (Black Formation Variegated Slates). Yes, you have also been given a secret name. You are that one who is called rDo-rje khro-mo 'od 'bar (Adamantine Refulgent Wrathful Female). rDo-rje khro-mo 'od 'bar come with your oath. Father, mother, five little sisters and brother *btsan*, and your circle of 360, come with your oath at this moment.

(v) *Kyai!* In the first times of the ancient epoch, in the A-su-ra yi brag-phug (Cave of the Titans) Slob-dpon padma 'byung-gnas oath-bound all the *lha* and *srin*. You oath-holders also come with your oath. According to the manner of performance in ancient times, we the knowledge-holders are now performing and signaling, so please come here. In the middle times of the intermediate epoch, on top of rGo-po gsang-ba, the house door of the *gnyan* Nam-ra, the Buddhist shepherd practitioner Shakya' sengge oath-bound all the *lha* and *srin*. You oath-holders also come with your oath. According to the manner of performance in ancient times, we the knowledge-holders are now performing and signaling, so please come here. In the late times of the recent epoch, in the good white valley of the eight peaks (Bar-tha), 'Bri-gung 'jig-rten mgon-po oath-bound all the *lha* and *srin*. You oath-holders also come here with your oath According to the manner of performance in ancient times, we the knowledge-holders are now performing and signaling, so please come here.

(vi) *Kyai!* The palace in which the king of the *btsan* stays is a golden castle *ldems se ldems*.[266] Here there is a lake of turquoise *khyi li li*.[267] There are pellets of snow *sha ra ra*.[268] There are many kinds of rainbows and light *thebs se theb*.[269] When the *btsan* king faces the enemy you make a fearful thunderous sound *di ri ri*.[270] There are sparks of red lightning *khyugs se khyug*.[271] There are missiles of hail *sha ra ra*.[272] There is a blizzard of molten metal thunderbolts *si li li*.[273] There are pearls of snow *sha ra ra*.

[266] *lDems se ldems* conveys a waving, quivering movement, as if the castle is shimmering in the light.
[267] *Khyi li li* depicts the rippling circular motion of the water.
[268] *Sha ra ra* is the action of the snow falling steadily and directly.
[269] *Thebs se theb* indicates that the rainbows and light are sparkling.
[270] *Di ri ri* portrays a very loud report like heavy banging or thunder.
[271] *Khyugs se khyug* conveys the forceful action of lightning striking directly or in zigzags.
[272] In this context *sha ra ra* depicts that the missiles are directly hitting their targets.
[273] *Si li li* seems to indicate the whistling sound that the thunderbolts make. The usage of this onomatopoeia does not seem very applicable here.

(vii) Your tawny horse with tiger markings on the legs looks like a leaping tiger. Your *mtshal-bu* (red horse) with leopard spots looks like a leopard striking an imposing posture. It has a golden bridle *si li li*[274] It has a blue turquoise halter *springs se spring*.[275] It has a yellow gold saddle *wangs se wangs*.[276] It has gold and silver saddle straps *shigs se shig*.[277] It has golden stirrups[278] *rgyang se rgyang*.[279] It has a silk horse-whip and strap under its belly *khyugs se khyug*.[280] It has four iron hoofs *khrabs se khrab*.[281] This spirited horse is neighing *si li li*.[282] Its red eyes look in the ten directions *hrigs se hrig*.[283] It has *ra-sā*[284] ears *krongs se krong*.[285] It has a mouth, nose, tongue, and muzzle *gu lu lu*.[286] It has a great fiery tail *ta la la*.[287] Its four hoofs are tongues of fire *phobs se phob*.[288]

(viii) *Kyai!* We praise your body *btsan* king. Your body is clad in a yellow copper cuirass. You wear a gold helmet on your head. On your right side is a tiger-skin quiver and on your left side a leopard-skin bow case. In you right hand you brandish a golden spear with a long handle. By rotating your spear you mobilize your army of *btsan*. In your left hand you hold a white cane horsewhip. You utterly destroy the oath-breakers.

(ix) You have a huge *btsan* cavalry *shigs se shig*.[289] Your horsemen are rotating spears *yugs se yugs*.[290] Your foot soldiers grind their teeth *thags se thags*.[291] Your tigers and leopards are racing *sprengs se spreng*.[292] Your

[274] *Si li li* conveys a jingling sound as if there are bells on the bridle.
[275] *sPrings se spring* appears to convey that the lead is making a sound like a taunt bowstring when plucked.
[276] *Wangs se wangs* depicts the rocking movement of the saddle.
[277] *Shigs se shig* simulates a shaking or vibrating movement.
[278] *Hang-sngo*. In this context probably denotes *yob* (stirrups) although the actual meaning of this word is not clear.
[279] *rGyang se rgyang* seems to portray the erratic motion of the stirrups.
[280] *Khyugs se khyug* might portray the snapping motion of these objects.
[281] *Khrabs se khrab* is the clapping sound that the hoofs of a prancing horse make.
[282] *Si li li* conveys the high-pitched sound of a horse.
[283] *Hrigs se hrig* indicates that the horse is looking intently.
[284] *Ra-sā* (probably cinnabar) might be an adjective for the color red.
[285] *Krongs se krong* depicts the movement of the horse pricking up its ears.
[286] *Gu lu lu* depicts the movements of these anatomical features when a horse pulls and tugs at grass when grazing.
[287] *Ta la la* is used to show the various sudden movements of fire in shifting winds.
[288] *Phobs se phob* is not a good choice for describing fire. In this line it probably indicates that the hoofs of the horse are round like shields.
[289] *Shigs se shig* is the deep rumbling sound that galloping horses make.
[290] *Yugs se yugs* seems to convey the waving and shaking movement of the spears.
[291] *Thags se thags* is the sound that the chattering, and grinding of teeth make. This action is a signal that the army is about to devour the enemy.
[292] *sPrengs se spreng* depicts the action of the animals darting in straight lines.

many wolves are howling *cings se cing*.[293] You have snow leopards, wolves and wild dogs *khrol lo lo*.[294] You have a *btsan* army arrayed against the enemy *sha ra ra*.[295] They have red regimental banners *lhabs se lhabs*.[296] Utterly destroy the enemy obstructers. Please accept these well-arranged incense [offerings] and *gtor-ma*. Carry out the activities entrusted to you.

(x) *Kyai*! Come, come *lha-btsan* from your abode. We are signaling, we are calling you from your abode. The multitude of Lha-btsan dkar-po are coming. Come from the peak of Ri-rgod zhal-dkar (Savage Mountain White Visage).[297] The multitude of Srin-rtsa dmar-po are coming. Come from the peak of g.Ya' dmar snying-ri (Red Slate Heart Mountain).[298] The many ones of Phyag-bsnyan are coming. Come from the peak of g.Yu yi rtag-ri. The multitude of the Goddess are coming. Come from the peak of Glog-mo brag-dkar.[299] The multitude of the Sister are coming. Come from the peak of Brag-nag g.ya' khra.[300]

(xi) The leader of the multitude on the right is coming. Come from the peak of Ni-ru ru-khyung.[301] The leader of the multitude on the left is coming. Come from the peak of Tshwa-gong rdza-skya (Salt Heap Gray Talus).[302] The multitude of wild *btsan* are coming. Come

[293] *Cings se cing* probably conveys the action of howling.

[294] *Khro lo lo* seems to indicate that the animals are howling or aggressively roving around.

[295] *Sha ra ra* depicts that the *btsan* army is moving directly against the enemy like hail falling straight down.

[296] *Lhabs se lhabs* conveys the rippling motion of the banners in the wind.

[297] This is the same mountain as Ri-god me 'bar, the *rgyab-ri* (supporting mountain) of Genghis Khan, according to local tradition. See Bellezza 2002a, p. 27. In the text entitled *Lha btsan nam ra'i gsol kha* (folio 3a) the name of this deity appears as Ri-rgod shil (= shel) mkhar (Savage Mountain Crystal Castle), which is described as a *sku-lha*. For bibliographic information on this text see fn. 328.

[298] Another name for the celebrated Bon mountain sKyung-ka, according to senior Bon-po of Bar-tha. This identification however, seems to escape the local Buddhists, as repeated inquiry on my part has shown. In *Lha btsan nam ra'i gsol kha* (folio 3a) Srin-rtsa dmar-po is also described as the *btsan* younger brother (*gcung-po*) of Nam-ra.

[299] According to local *'brog-pa*, this is the outcrop known to them as Lha-lcam brag-dkar. In the oral tradition, this small white formation, at the southern foot of the Nam-ra range, is the wife of Nam-ra. This local identification is confirmed in the two texts entitled *Lha btsan nam ra'i bsang mchod*, which record Nam-ra's consort as Lha-lcam glog-mo. In the *Lha btsan nam ra'i gsol kha* she is called Lha-lcam glog-mo brag-dkar (folio 3a). For bibliographic information on these Bon texts see fn. 328.

[300] This mountain is located south of sKyung-ka, directly above the Bon-po village of g.Ya' khra, in Na-dmar chung.

[301] This is the *yul-lha* of Na-dmar che, located approximately 40 kilometers south of Nam-ra. *Lha btsan nam ra'i gsol kha*: Ne-ru'i ri khyung (folio 3a).

[302] Mountain located in the Nam-ra range.

from the peak of Srib kyi khang-dmar (Shady Red House).[303] The multitude of lesser *btsan* are coming. Come from the peak of Nam-nyer gag-dmar.[304]

(xii) The multitude of the eastern portal are coming. Come from the peak of sNgam-chen khyung-rdzong (Great Fierce Khyung Castle).[305] The multitude of the southern portal are coming. Come from La-nag klu-sngon (Black Pass Blue Klu).[306] The multitude of the western portal are coming. Come from the peak of Go-ra g.ya' dmar.[307] The multitude of the northern portal are coming. Come from sGro-gad phyug-ri.[308] The multitude of messengers are coming. Come from the peak of rTsi yi bya-khyung.[309] The multitude of workers are coming. Come from the peak of Sho-mo jo-ri.[310] The multitude of butchers are coming. Come from the peak of Sha-pho ru-rtseg (Piled Up Stag Horns).[311]

(xiii) *Kyai*! King of the *btsan* Nam-ra, the five brother and sister *btsan*, and the circle of 360 *btsan*, the time has come [to come] with your oath. Please accept these nicely arranged incense offerings. Carry out the activities entrusted to you.

(xiv) *Kyai*! In the first times of the ancient epoch, Slob-dpon padma 'byung-gnas made Nam-ra's outer support a yak. He emanated a divine white yak manifestation. According to the method of performance in ancient times, we the knowledge-holders now erect the support to the god, do not be ungracious. We consecrate the support, do not be without blessings. We regularly attend the gods, do not be without your power. In the middle times of the intermediate epoch, the Buddhist

[303] *Lha btsan nam ra'i gsol kha*: Srab (= Srib) kyi 'khar (= mkhar) dmar (folio 3b). Reported by local informants to be a peak a little north of Nam-ra.

[304] Mountain located in the Nam-ra range. *Lha btsan nam ra'i gsol kha*: Nam-gnyer rtse (folio 3a).

[305] *Lha btsan nam ra'i gsol kha*: rNgam-chen khyung-rdzong (folio 3a). It is reported to be a *yul-lha* of eastern Nag-chu county.

[306] According to local residents, this is La-nag klu-rdzong, a pass connecting Bar-tha with dPal-mgon county. This rendering of the name is confirmed in the *Lha btsan nam ra'i gsol kha* (folio 3a).

[307] Go-ra is the name of the well-known *yul-lha* mountain of Go-ra township, dPal-mgon county. It is situated 70 kilometers northwest of Nam-ra.

[308] This is the well known *yul-lha* in the south of A-mdo county.

[309] Locally identified as the chief *yul-lha* of Bya-khyung township, dPal-mgon county. It is situated 100 kilometers northwest of Nam-ra.

[310] *Lha btsan nam ra'i gsol kha*: Sha-mong 'dzom-ra (folio 3a). It is located in the gSang-stod division of Bar-tha township.

[311] This mountain is situated approximately 30 kilometers south of Nam-ra, on the southwest side of the prominent peak known as sKyung-ka. *Lha btsan nam ra'i gsol kha*: Sha-pho ru-gcig (One Horned Stag) (folio 3a).

practitioner Shakya Sengge made the flag the middle support of Nam-ra. He manifested a wonderful red flag. According to the method of performance in ancient times, we the knowledge-holders now erect the support to the god, do not be ungrateful. We consecrate the support, do not be without blessings. We regularly attend the gods, do not be without your power. In the late times of the recent epoch, 'Bri-gung 'jig-rten-gsum mgon made gold the inner support of Nam-ra. He emanated a yellow gold castle manifestation. According to the method of performance in ancient times, we the knowledge-holders now erect the support to the god, do not be ungrateful. We consecrate the support, do not be without blessings. We regularly attend the gods, do not be without your power.[312]

(xv) *Kyai*! The support component offerings to the *btsan* king and his circle are offering articles, musical instruments that ring, [other] desired objects, seven symbols of royal sovereignty, eight auspicious symbols, and five types of jewels. We offer these to Nam-ra and his circle in order that you might be fulfilled. We offer as supports excellent tawny horses, black yaks, conch white ewes, goats, birds, dogs, wild carnivores, wild ungulates, impervious adamantine armor, and sharp weapons. Bestow upon us the capability for the attainment of all our desires. A red silk regimental banner, a tiger-skin quiver, a leopard-skin bow case, a sword, a brocade *ber-chen* (a kind of heavy cloak), a turban [made] from a bundle of red silk; these are the pure outer, inner and secret offerings. These are the components of the [ritual] performance offered to the *btsan* king and his circle: Very wide refulgent vessels[313] fashioned from jewels, dairy foods, sweets, flesh, blood, an amassed group of *gtor-ma* like a mountain, and an ocean of tea, beer, libations and nectar.

(xvi) *Kyai*! In the morning, the king of the *btsan* Nam-ra assumes a peaceful guise. When you assume a peaceful guise you ride a straw-colored horse with a white face. You wear a white *'jol-ber* on your body. You hold a white regimental banner in your hand. On your right side you have a tiger [skin] quiver, and on your left side a leopard [skin] bow case. You have a circle of 360. Please accept these ornamented *gtor-ma*. Carry out the activities entrusted to you. Carry out your peaceful activities.

(xvii) *Kyai*! In the afternoon, the king of the *btsan* Nam-ra assumes an expanding guise. When you assume your expanding guise you ride a

[312] This is followed by one line in *'khyug-yig* (cursive script) instructing the ritualists to bring the *gtor-ma*. It has been omitted from the translation because it contains spelling and grammatical errors.

[313] These vessels are so large because they are thought of as models of the cosmos. Some of the vessels would be used in the ritual to hold the offerings, symbolically increasing their quantity immeasurably.

tawny horse with tiger markings on its legs. On your body you wear a yellow *'jol-ber*. You hold a yellow regimental banner in your hand. On your right side you have a tiger [skin] quiver, and on your left side a leopard [skin] bow case. You have a circle of 360.[314] Please accept these ornamented *gtor-ma*. Carry out the activities entrusted to you. Carry out your expanding activities.

(xviii) *Kyai*! In the evening, the king of the *btsan* Nam-ra assumes a power-generating guise. When you assume a power-generating guise you ride a reddish horse with a white face. On your body you wear a red *'jol-ber*. You hold a red regimental flag in your hand. On your right side you have a tiger [skin] quiver, and on your left side a leopard [skin] bow case. You have a circle of 360. Please accept these ornamented *gtor-ma*. Carry out the activities entrusted to you. Carry out your power-generating activities.

(xix) *Kyai*! At the end of the night the king of the *btsan* Nam-ra assumes a wrathful guise. When you assume a wrathful guise you ride a dark brown horse with white lower legs. You hold a black regimental banner in your hands. On your right side you have a tiger [skin] quiver, and on your left side a leopard [skin] bow case. You have a circle of 360. Please accept these ornamented *gtor-ma*. Carry out the activities entrusted to you. Carry out your wrathful activities.

(xx) *Kyai*! When the *btsan* king Nam-ra goes into space you ride the king of the bird mount, the *khyung*. You are surrounded by a circle of many *khyung* riders. The wings of the great *khyung lhabs se lhabs*.[315] Please accept these ornamented *gtor-ma*. Carry out the activities entrusted to you. *Kyai*! When the *btsan* king Nam-ra comes from the white snow mountain you ride a white lioness. A circle of many lion riders also surrounds you. The roar of the great lion *chems se chems*.[316] Please accept these ornamented *gtor-ma*. Carry out the activities entrusted to you. *Kyai*! When the *btsan* king Nam-ra goes to the sandalwood forest you ride a striped tigress mount. You are also surrounded by a circle of many tiger riders. The six whorls of the tigress *shegs se shegs*.[317] Please accept these ornamented *gtor-ma*. Carry out the activities entrusted to you.

[314] This line has been omitted from my copy of the text but the arrangement of the refrain for each of the four *'phrin-las* manifestations of Nam-ra indicates that this was accidental.

[315] *Lhabs se lhabs* conveys the flapping motion of the wings.

[316] *Chems se chems* simulates the thunderous roar of the lion.

[317] *Shegs se shegs* (spelling as in the text) indicates that the whorls or circular convergences of the tiger's stripes are vibrating or pulsating.

(xxi) *Kyai*! When the *btsan* king Nam-ra goes to the slates and meadows you ride a female deer mount of the *sman*. You are also surrounded by a circle of many deer riders. They are the servant manifestations *sprengs se spreng*.[318] Please accept these ornamented *gtor-ma*. Carry out the activities entrusted to you. *Kyai*! When the *btsan* king Nam-ra goes all around the earth you ride a tawny horse with tiger markings on its legs. You are also surrounded by a circle of many horsemen. The horse is caparisoned with divine decorations *sha ra ra*.[319] Please accept these ornamented *gtor-ma*. Carry out the activities entrusted to you.

(xxii) *Kyai*! King of the *btsan* Nam-ra you are the scion of the *btsan* manifestation. You are of the marvelous manifestation lineage of the *btsan*. You are the *lha-btsan* protector of the north. You went to India again and again. Over a long period of time you protected and still protect the circle of the Buddhist doctrine. You are the defender of the north quarter of Tibet. Powerful *gnod-sbyin* Nam-ra and your wrathful circles of the four quarters, please accept these ornamented *gtor-ma*. Carry out the activities entrusted to you. *Kyai*! Big brother [Nam-ra] when you manifest as a man you sometimes appear as a Buddhist monk with a *'jol-ber*. You are the protector of all the Buddhists. You are the executioner of all the Buddhist oath-breakers. You sever the life-force of all those who renounce their oath. Quickly apprehend all the enemy obstructers and oath-breakers, and [put them] in the blazing palace of the triangle.[320]

(xxiii) *Kyai*! Big brother when you manifest as a man you sometimes assume the guise of a *zhang-blon*.[321] You are the protector of all the Bon-po. You are the executioner of all the Bon-po oath-breakers. You sever the life-force of all apostates. Quickly apprehend all the enemy obstructers and oath-breakers, and [put them] in the blazing palace of the triangle. *Kyai*! Big brother when you manifest as a man [you sometimes] appear as a great *sngags-pa* with a black hat. You are the protector of all the *sngags-pa*. Quickly apprehend all the enemy obstructers and oath-breakers, and [put them] in the blazing palace of the triangle.

(xxiv) *Kyai*! Do not pass beyond the oath and commands of Slob-dpon padma 'byung-gnas. Do not pass beyond the oath and commands of

[318] *sPrengs se spreng* conveys that the deer are bounding.

[319] *Sha ra ra* seems to show the vigorous motion of the ornaments.

[320] The triangle is a symbol and implement of wrathful deities. In exorcistic rites triangular enclosures are built to incarcerate demons and harmful forces, which are then either rendered innocuous or slain.

[321] The *zhang-blon/lon* were Imperial era ministers drawn from clans not related to the king. Early reference to them is found in the Tun-huang manuscripts and in the Zhol *rdo-ring* inscription of 765. See Richardson 1977, p. 15.

the Buddhist practitioner shepherd Shakya sengge.[322] Do not pass beyond the oath and commands of 'Bri-gung 'jig-rten-gsum mgon. *Kyai*! The offerings given: We give you offerings of *bha-gling*[323] and *gtor-ma*. We give you offerings of a fire-colored banner. We give you offerings of yellow gold. We give you offerings of blue lapis lazuli. We give you offerings of hero beer.[324] We give you offerings of tea.[325] We give you offerings of silver.[326] We give you offerings of the three white foods and milk. We give you offerings of flags in five colors. Only receive [these offerings], not mistakenly [other things].

(xxv) Consummation: We request consummation from you. We request the capability for the attainment that our lives do not perish and long life. We request the capability for the attainment of livestock and wealth. We request the capability for the attainment of foods of good fortune. We request the capability for the attainment of beautiful clothing. We request the capability for the attainment of melodious music. We request the capability for the attainment of fragrant incense. We request the capability for the attainment of foods of many tastes. Carry out the activities entrusted to you. We request from you these activities: show bad omens to the enemy who hates us. Annihilate the harming obstructers. Carry out the activities entrusted to you![327]

Transliteration of the Nag po chen po bka' nyan *text*

(i) Om swam (= swa) bha was stong pas sbyang / stong pa'i ngang las / rang gi mdun du dam nyam (= nyams) sgral (= bsgral) la ba'i sha khrag gtor ma dri ro phun gsum (= sum) tshogs pa bdud rtsi rgya mtsho chen por gyur / Om A hung / lan gsum / Om swam (= swa) bha wa (= was) sbyang (= sbyangs) stong pa nyid gyur /

(ii) stongs (= stong) pa'i ngang las byang phyog (= phyogs) nam ra nyan (= gnyan) gyi rgod khang nas / gnod sbyin gyi rgyal po chen

[322] Spelling as in the text.

[323] *Bha-gling* is a king of *gtor-ma* often in the shape of a face or entire human body.

[324] *dPa' bo chang*. An epithet for beer in Tibet. This name is commonly said to be derived from the ability of beer to make the weak courageous.

[325] The words *yu-mar* and *ja* are used in conjunction. The former is possibly the Zhang-zhung word for tea, and the latter the common Tibetan word for tea. *Yu-mar* might also be related to the Tibetan word *yongs-dmar*, which means things that are completely red like plain tea.

[326] The expression *kham-pa dngul* is used here, *kham-pa* being an adjective that describes the color of silver (as well as a bay color in yaks).

[327] There is some question as to the actual end of this text due to the grafting of a small *gtor-ma* offering onto it. I end the text in the most appropriate place.

po sku mdog dmar po zhal gcig phyag gnyis pa / phyag yas (= g.yas) ba dan dmar po nam mkha' la phyar pa / phyag g.yon btsan zhags khra bo rdig (= bsdigs) mdzub gyi (= kyis) 'dzin pa / 'byol por (= 'jol ber) gser ma gsum rtsigs gyon pa / chibs su rag pa stag lag la 'chibs (= chibs) pa / sprul pa yang sprul gyi (= gyis) sa dang bar nang (= snang) gang ba de yang ngon (= sngon) gyi dam tshig dgong la / mchod pa'i gnas 'dir badzra sa ma yā dza ni /

(iii) hung nag po chen po bka' nyan pa / byang phyogs skyongs ba'i lha btsan ni / btsan gyi rgyal po nam ra ni / pha ni lha la ma ni srin / lha srin sprul pa mthu rtsal can / ming sring lcam dral lnga ru srid / lha btsan de nas mtshan gsol pa / lha btsan de ni dkar po zer / bsang (= gsang) ba de ni mtshan gsol pa / rdo rje skyes chen zhes kyang zer / rdo rje skyes chen dam la shogs / gcung lha de ni mtshan gsol ba / sri tsa de ni dmar po zer / gsang ba de ni mtshan gsol ba / rdo rje grags skyong zhes kyang zer / rdo rje grags skyong dam la shogs / phyags bsnyan de ni mtshan gsol ba / g.yu yi (= yi) rtag ri zhes kyang zer / gsang ba de ni mtshan gsol ba / rdo rje skyes cig zhes kyang zer / rdo rje skyes cig dam la shogs /

(iv) lha lcam de ni mtshan gsol ba / glog mo de ni brag dkar zer / gsang ba de ni mtshan gsol ba / rdo rje gang (= gangs) rum sman cig zer / gangs rum sman gcig dam la shogs / sring lcam de ni mtshan gsol ba / brag nag de ni g.ya' khra zer / gsang ba de ni mtshan gsol ba / rdo rje khro mo 'od 'bar zer / khro mo 'od 'bar dam la shogs / yab yum btsan chung lcam sring lnga / sum rgya (= brgya) drug bcu'i (= cu'i) 'khor dang bcas / da lta nyid du dam la shogs /

(v) kyai / sngon gyi bskal pa'i dang po la / slob dpon padma 'byung gnas kyis / A su ra yi brag phug tu / lha srin yong (= yongs) kyang dam la brtags (= btags) / dam can khyod kyang dam la shogs / sngon gyi skabs (= bskal) pa'i tshul bzhin du / da lta rig 'dzin bdag gyi (= cag gyis) / sgrub phyir skul phyir gshegs su gsol / bar gyi skal (= bskal) pa'i dbus ma la / 'brog ban shakya' sengge yis / nam ra'i gnyan gyi sgo khang du / rgo (= rgod) po gsang ba'i yang steng du / lha srin yon (= yongs) kyang dam la brtags (= btags) / dam can khyod kyang dam la shogs / sngon gyi sgrub pa'i tshul bzhin du / da lta rig 'dzin bdag cag gi (= gis) / sgrub phyir skur phyir

gshegs su gsol / dus kyi skal (= bskal) pa'i phyi ma la / 'bri gung 'jig rten mgon po gyis (= yis) / zang (= bzang) lung dkar po rtse brgyad du / lha srin yongs kyang dam la btags / dam can khyod kyang dam la shogs / sngon gyi sgrub pa'i tshul bzhin du / da lta rig 'dzin bdag cag gi (= gis) / sgrub phyir bskur phyir gshegs su gsol /

(vi) kyai / btsan rgyal bzhugs pa'i pho brang du / gser gyi sku 'khar (= mkhar) ldems se ldems / g.yu yi mtsho mo khyi li li / dung gi khu 'phang sha ra ra / 'ja' 'od sna tshogs thebs se theb / btsan rgyal dgra la chas tsa na / ma rung (= rungs) 'brug dgra (= sgra) di ri ri / me zer glog dmar khyug (= khyugs) se khyug / thun gyi ser ra sha ra ra / thogs (= thog) gi bu yugs (= yug) si li li / mu stegs (= tig) khu 'phang sha ra ra /

(vii) chibs su rag pa stag lag chibs / rag pa stag lag stag ltar mchongs / mtshal bu gzig khra gzig ltar 'gyings / ser (= gser) srab ser po si li li / g.yu mthur sngon po springs se springs / gser sga ser po wang (= wangs) se wangs / gong smad gser dngul shig (= shigs) se shig / gser gyi hang sngo rgyang se rgyas (= rgyang) / dar lcags glo nan khyug (= khyugs) se khyug / lcags kyi rmig bzhi khrabs se khrab / rta rgod 'tsher skad si li li / mig dmar phyogs bcu hrigs se hrig / ra sā rna ba bkrong (= krongs) se bkrong (= krong) / kha sna lce mchu gu lu lu / rnga ma me chen ta la la / rmig bzhi me lce phobs se phob /

(viii) kyai / btsan rgyal sku la bdag bstod do / sku la bse khrab ser po gsol / dbu la gser gyi dmog (= rmog) zhu gsol / stag dong g.yas la gzig la shub g.yon / phyag g.yas gser mdung mtsham ring rnams (= bsnams) / mdung skor byed cing btsan dmag 'dus / g.yon rba phyag (= lcags) dkar po rnams (= bsnams) / dam nyam (= nyams) thal ba'i rdul du rlog /

(ix) btsan dmag gya (= rkya) khrom shig (= shigs) se shig / rta pa mdung skor yugs se yugs / bskang (= rkang) thang so sgra thags se thags / stag gzig rgyug byed spreng (= sprengs) se spreng / sce lcang (= lce spyang) ngum (= ngu) zing cings se cing / bsa' (= gsa') spyang 'phar ba khrol lo lo / btsan dmag dgra la sha ra ra / ru dar dmar po lhabs se lhabs / dgra bsgegs thal ba'i bdul (= rdul) du rlog / gsham pa'i gsang (= bsangs) gtor 'di bzhes la / bcol ba'i 'phrin las sgrub par mdzod /

(x) kyai' / skyod do lha btsan gnas nas bskyod / bskul lo lha btsan gnas nas skul / lha btsan dkar po khrom skyod pa / ri rgod zhal dkar rtse nas skyod / srin rtsa dmar po'i khrom skyod pa / g.ya' dmar snying ri rtse nas skyod / phyag bsnyan rnams kyi khrom skyod pa / g.yu yi rtag ri'i rtse nas skyod / lha lcam rnams kyi khrom skyod pa / glog mo brag dkar rtse nas skyod / sring lcam rnams kyi khrom skyod pa / brag nag g.ya' khra'i rtse nas skyod /

(xi) g.yas kyi ru 'dren khrom skyod pa / ni ru ru khyung rtse nas skyod / g.yon gyi ru 'dren khrom skyod pa / tsha khong (= gong) rdza skya'i rtse nas skyod / btsan rgod rnams kyi khrom skyod pa / srib kyi khang dmar rtse nas skyod / btsan phran rnams kyi khrom skyod pa / nam nyer gag dmar rtse nas skyod /

(xii) shar gyi sgo yi khrom skyod pa / sngam (= rngam) chen khyung rdzong rtse nas skyod / lho yi sgo yi khrom skyod pa / la nag klu sngon rtse nas skyod / nub kyi sgo yi khrom skyod pa / go ra g.ya' dmar rtse nas skyod / byang gi sgo yi khrom skyod pa / sgro gad phyug ri'i rtse nas skyod / pho nya rnams gyi (= kyi) khrom skyod pa / rtsi gi (= yi) bya khyung rtse nas skyod / las mkhan rnams kyi khrom skyod pa / sho mo jo ri rtse nas skyod / shan pa rnams kyi khrom skyod pa / sha pho ru rtsig rtse nas skyod /

(xiii) kyai / btsan gyi rgyal po nam ra ni / ming sring btsan chung lcam sring lnga / sum rgya (= brgya) drug bcu (= cu'i) 'khor dang bcas / khyed kyi thugs dam dus la bab / gsham pa'i bsang mchod 'di bzhes la / bcol ba'i 'phrin las 'grub par mdzod /

(xiv) kyai / sngon gyi skal pa'i dang po la / slob dpon padma 'byung gnas kyis nam ra'i phyi rten g.yag la byas / sprul pa'i lha g.yag dkar po sprul / sngon gyi sgrub pa'i tshul bzhin du / da lta rigs (= rig) 'dzin bdag cag gis / lha la rten btsug drin ma 'khyam (= chung) / rten la dbang skur byin ma chung / rgyun gyi lha rnams mthu ma chung / bar gyi skal (= bskal) pa'i dbus ma la / 'brog ban shakya sengge yis / nam ra'i bar rten dar la byas / ya mtshan ru dar dmar po sprul /sngon gyi sgrub pa'i tshul bzhin du / da lta rig 'dzin bdag cag gis / lha la rten btsug drin ma chung / rten la dbang skur byin ma chung / rgyun gyi lha rnams mthu ma chung / dus kyi skal (= bskal) pa'i phyi ma la / 'bri gung 'jig rten gsum mgon gyis / nam ra'i nang brten (= rten) gser la byas / sprul pa'i

gser mkhar ser po sprul / sngon gyi sgrub pa'i tshul bzhin du / da lta rig 'dzin bdag cag gis / lha la rten btsug drin ma chung / rten la dbang skur byin ma chung / rgyun gyi lha rnams mthu ma chung /

(xv) kyai / btsan rgyal 'khor bcas mchod pa'i rten rdzas ni / nyer spyod rol sil 'dod yon rgyal srid bdun / bkra shis rtag (= rtags) brgyad rin chen rnam pa lnga / nam ra 'khor bcas mchod cing skang gyur gcig / rta mchog rag pa g.yag rog dung mo lug / ra kyad (= skyes) bya khyi can (= gcan) zan ri dag (= dwags) sogs / bsra 'phig (= bsra mkhreg) rdo rje go khrab rno ba'i mtshon / rten du 'bul lo 'dod dgu'i dngos sgrub stsol / dar dmar ru mtshon stag dong gzig shub gri / za 'og ber chen dar dmar chun po'i thod / phyi nang gsang ba'i rten rdzes dam pa ni / btsan rgyal 'khor bcas sgrubs pa'i rdzas su 'bul / rin chen las grub 'od 'bar snod yangs su / dkar dmar sha khrag gtor tshogs ri ltar spung (= spungs) / ja chang gser skyems bdud rtsi rgya mtsho 'di / btsan rgyal 'khor bcas sgrub pa'i rdzas su 'bul /

(xvi) kyai / btsan gyi rgyal po nam ra ni / snga gro (= dro) zhi ba'i chas su zhug (= zhugs) / zhi ba'i chas su zhugs tsa na / chibs su ngang dkar zhur po chibs / 'jol ber dkar po sku la gsol / ru dar dkar po phyag na rnams (= bsnams) / stag sdong g.yas la gzig shub g.yon / gsum brgya drug bcu'i 'khor dang bcas / brgyan pa'i gtor ma 'di bzhes la / bcol ba'i 'phrin las sgrub par mdzod / khyod kyi zhi ba'i las mdzod cig /

(xvii) kyai / btsan gyi rgyal po nam ra ni */ phyi gro (= dro) rgyas pa'i chas su zhugs / rgyas pa'i chas su zhugs tsa na / chibs su rag pa stag lag chibs / 'jol ber ser po sku la gsol / ru dar ser po phyag na rnams (= bsnams) / stag sdong g.yas la gzig shub g.yon / gsum (= sum) brgya drug bcu'i (= cu'i) 'khor dang bcas */ brgyan pa'i (= pas) gtor ma 'di bzhes la / bcol ba'i 'phrin las sgrub par mdzod / khyod kyi rgyas pa'i las mdzod cig /

* These lines were omitted from my copy of the text.

(xviii) kyai / btsan gyi rgyal po nam ra ni / srod la dbang gyi (= gi) chas su zhugs / dbang gi chas su zhugs tsa na / chibs su mtshal bu zhur po chibs / 'jol ber dmar po sku la gsol / ru dar dkar po phyag na bsnams / stag sdong g.yas la gzig shub g.yon / gsum brgya drug bcu'i 'khor dang bcas / brgyan pa'i gtor ma 'di bzhes

la / bcol ba'i 'phrin las sgrub par mdzod / khyod kyi dbang gi las mdzod cig /

(xix) kyai / btsan gyi rgyal po nam ra ni / mtho (= tho) rang drag po'i chas su zhugs / drag po chas su zhugs tsa na / chibs su bra nag ting (= rting) dkar chibs / 'jol ber nag po sku la gsol / ru dar dkar po phyag na rnams (= bsnams) / stag dong g.yas la gzig shub g.yon / gsum brgya drug bcu'i 'khor dang bcas / brgyan pa'i gtor ma 'di bzhes la / bcol ba'i 'phrin las sgrub par mdzod / khyod kyi drag po'i las mdzod cig /

(xx) kyai / btsan gyi rgyal po nam ra ni / nam mkha' mthongs su gshegs tsa na / chibs su bya rgyal khyung la chibs / 'khor du khyung zhon mang po'i (= pos) bskor / khyung chen gshog sgro lhabs se lhabs / brgyan pa'i gtor ma 'di bzhes la / bcol ba'i 'phrin las sgrub par mdzod / kyai / btsan gyi rgyal po nam ra ni / gangs dkar rtse nas gshegs tsa na / chibs su sengge dkar mo chibs / 'khor yang seng zhon mang pos bskor / seng chen ngar skad chem (= chems) se chems / brgyan pa'i gtor ma 'di bzhes la / bcol ba'i 'phrin las sgrub par mdzod / kyai / btsan gyi rgyal po nam ra ni / tsanda (= tsan dan) nag (= nags) la gshegs pa'i tshe / chibs su stag mo ris bkra chibs / 'khor yang stag zhon mang pos bskor /stag mo 'dzom drug shegs se shegs / brgyan pa'i gtor ma 'di bzhes la / bcol ba'i 'phrin las sgrub par mdzod /

(xxi) kyai / bstan gyi rgyal po nam ra ni / g.ya' dang dpa' (= spangs) la gshegs pa'i tshe / chibs su sman sha yu mo chibs / 'khor yang sha zhon mang pos bskor / sprul pa rgyug byed sprengs se spreng / brgyan pa'i gtor ma 'di bzhes la / bcol ba'i 'phrin las sgrub par mdzod / kyai / btsan gyi rgyal po nam ra ni / sa zhi (= gzhi) yongs la gshegs pa'i tshe / chibs su rag pa stag lag chibs / 'khor yang rta zhon mang pos bskor / lha rgan rta chas sha ra ra / brgyan pa'i gtor ma 'di bzhes la / bcol ba'i 'phrin las sgrub par mdzod /

(xxii) kyai / btsan gyi rgyal po nam ra sprul pa btsan gyi bu*/ ya mtshan sprul pa btsan gyi rigs / byang phyogs skyongs pa'i lha btsan khyod / rgya gar yul du bzhud bzhud pa / chos 'khor yun du bsrung srung pa / byang phyogs kha ba skyong ba dang / gnod sbyin nam ra mthu bstsal (= rtsal) can / drag po'i sde bzhi 'khor dang bcas / brgyan pa'i gtor ma 'di bzhes la / bcol ba'i 'phrin las sgrub par mdzod / kyai / jo bo mi ru sprul tsa na / re ga (= ras 'ga') ban dhe 'jol ber can / ban dhe yongs kyi srung ma byed / ban dhe nyams pa'i gshed ma byed / mna' zan yongs kyi srog spyod (= gcod) byed / gru gsum 'bar ba'i gzhal yas na / dgra bgegs dam nyams myur du khug /

* For unknown reasons this line does not maintain the metrical structure of the text.

(xxiii) kyai / jo bo mi ru sprul tsa na / ras 'ga' zhang blon chas su zhug / bon po yongs kyi srung ma byed / bon po nyams pa'i gshed ma byed / mna' zan yongs kyi srog gcod byed / gru gsum 'bar ba'i gzhal yas na / dgra bgegs dam nyams myur du khug / kyai jo bo mi ru sprul tsa na / sngags pa chen po zhwa nag can / sngags pa yongs gyi (= kyi) srung ma byed / dam tshig nyams pa'i srog gcod byed / gru gsum 'bar ba'i gzhal yas na / dgra bgegs dam nyams myur du khug /

(xxiv) kyai / slob dpon padma 'byung gnas kyi / bka' dang dam las ma 'da' zhig / 'brog ban shakya sengge yi / bka' dang dam las ma 'da' shig / 'bri gung 'jig rten gsum mgon gyi / bka' dang dam las ma 'da' shig / mchod pa 'bul ba 'di / kyai / khyod la mchod pa 'bul ba ni / bha gling gtor ma'i mchod pa 'bul / leb gan (= le brgan) dar gyi mchod pa 'bul / ser po gser gyi mchod pa 'bul / mu men sngon mo mchod pa 'bul / dpa' bo chang gi mchod pa 'bul / yu mar ja yi mchod pa 'bul / kham pa dngul gyi mchod pa 'bul / dkar gsum 'o ma'i mchod pa 'bul / dar mtshon sna lnga mchod pa 'bul / 'bul ba bdag gi mchod pa bzhes / bzhes pa khyod kyi ma nor cig / rgyan (= brgyan) pa'i gtor ma 'di bzhes la / bcol ba'i 'phrin las sgrub par mdzod /

(xxv) dngos grub ni / khyod la dngos grub zhu ba ni / 'chi med tshe yi dngos grub zhu / rkang bzhi nor gyi dngos grub zhu / mar (= rma) g.yang zas kyi dngos grub zhu / mdzes pa gos kyi dngos grub zhu / snyan pa dbyangs kyi dngos grub zhu / dri zhim spos kyi dngos grub zhu / ro brgya zas kyi dngos grub zhu / bcol ba'i 'phrin las sgrub par mdzod / khyed la 'phrin las zhu ba ni / sdang ba'i dgra la stag (= rtags) thon cig / gnod pa'i bgegs rnam tshar chod cig / khyed la 'phrin las sgrub par mdzod /

In Bon tradition, the mountain Nam-ra is the chief earthly residence of the powerful warrior deity Mi-bdud 'byams-pa khrag-mgo. This

is explicitly stated in the Bon invocatory text entitled *Called the gSol-kha of Nam-ra the Rapid Fulfillment of Desires the Cloud Offerings of All Desires of Happiness*. This text provides a pithy description of Nam-ra's appearance and activities:[328]

> By virtue of your inner nature (*nang-ltar*) you are Mi-bdud, the lord of all the *bdud* and *btsan*. Your body is a very dark blue color and you ride a fierce great otter (*sram chen rngam-pa*). Wielding an ax and ensign you slay the enemy. You are the protector of the Bon doctrine and *sgra-bla* of the *gshen*. By virtue of your outer nature (*phyi-ltar*) you are known as the elder brother doctrine protector (*bka' srung*) in all the countries of the north (*byang-phyogs yul*). You have a bright red body, one head and two arms. Holding aloft a *dbal* banner in the right hand you rain down the good fortune of wealth. By shooting arrows with the left [hand] you slay the enemies. Riding the red horse with a white face of the *btsan* (*btsan rta dmar zhur*) you circle the four worlds. You actually reveal your face [to your votaries], and are the custodian of wealth (*dkor-bdag*) for the dynasty of kings. In front of the great, excellent dBal-gsas rngam-pa you offered the life-force of your heart. Do not break your oath. Do not be malevolent. Carry out the activities we have entrusted to you.

According to Bon conceptions, Mi-bdud is not a mountain god but a more important type of protector deity. He is the central figure of a tradition known as bDud-bon with its own distinctive liturgies and vocabulary. bDud-bon is believed to be a particularly ancient tradition predating even the prehistoric founder of Bon, gShen-rab mi-bo-che. Mi-bdud, like most other *bdud*, is entirely black in color. As we have seen, the invocatory text to Nam-ra authored by 'Jig-rten mgon-po is entitled *The Obedient Great Black One*, yet it says nothing about this appellation. Nevertheless, given the Bon tradition, it seems entirely possible that this text was named with Mi-bdud in mind; in reference to a pre-existing body of lore. After all, *The Obedient Great Black One* does clearly assert that Nam-ra is a Bon deity associated with the ancient *zhang-blon* tradition, as well as being a Buddhist god.

[328] See *Lha btsan nam ra'i gsol kha bsam don myur 'grub ces bya ba 'dod dgu dgyes pa'i mchod sprin*, folio 4b, lns. 1–5. The colophon of this text of six folios tells us that it was written by bSod-nams blo-gros, the 21st abbot of sMan-ri (1784–1835). It was destroyed in the Chinese Cultural Revolution but Shel-btsun nyi-ma rgyal-mtshan was able to recite it. It was transcribed by g.Yung-drung bstan-pa'i rgyal-mtshan. I obtained this text in the Bon enclave of Na-dmar chung, Nag-chu. Members of Nam-ra's retinue not also mentioned in 'Jig-rten mgon-po's text are: Ka-chen g.yu 'phru (Great Pillar Turquoise Helmet Finial), 'Brong-nag mtsho-sman (Black Wild Yak Lake sMan), bTsan-dmar 'phyug (= phyug) po (Red bTsan Riches One), 'Thon (= mThon) pa'i gtor, and 'Phyug (= phyug) bdag rdo-rje (Adamantine Wealth Master). *Lha btsan nam ra'i gsol kha* is attached to two other texts for Nam-ra that were also written by bSod-nams blo-gros. The first of these is *Lha btsan nam ra'i bsang mchod* (about two folios in length; folios 6a to 7a of the collection), whose author is referred to as dBra-ston shes-rab dgongs-rgyal. The text begins; "In the country, the northern upper country, are Nam-ra lha-btsan, Lha-gcam (= lcam) glog-mo and others." This work in general terms continues to mention Nam-ra's manifestations and entourage. The second text is identically titled *Lha btsan nam ra'i bsang mchod* (1 folio; folio 7a and 7b of the collection). The author in this text is called Shil (= Shel) bla bsod-nams rgyal-mtshan. It records the consort of Nam-ra as follows (folio 7a): "We present Lha-btsan nam-ra and your circle with offerings of incense and *phud* (first offerings of food and drink). We present the great mother Lha-gcam (= lcam) glog-mo with offerings of incense and *phud*."

In the text entitled *Dra ba nag po lda zor bsgrub thabs ma bu tshang ba*,[329] it records that Mi-bdud mated with a variety of female deities throughout the universe, giving him a spatial purview larger than that of the mountain deities:[330]

> Mi-bdud 'byams-pa khrag-mgo mated with Srin-mo lang-tsho sngon-mo and had four sons and daughters . . . He also coupled with gShin-lcam gu-ma-ron, the daughter of gShin-rje smigs-pa, at the castle of Dur-khrod mi-mgo (Cemetery Human Head), and had one son . . . He also coupled with dMu-lcam mgrin-sngon-ma, the daughter of dMu-rje btsan-po, at the castle of Khro-chu dmu-lugs, and had one son . . . He also coupled with Klu-za 'thing-btsun-ma, the daughter of Klu-rgyal 'jog-po, at the castle of Bal-po-sprin, and had one son . . . He also coupled with gNod-sbyin 'phrul gyi rgyal-mo in the depths of the overflowing poison lake, and had one son . . . He also landed on the shore of the southwestern ocean and mated with Klu-lcam sbal 'go-ma, and had one son . . . He also mated with Rlung-smigs rgyal-mo in the haze of space, and from a molten pig iron egg hatched a giant *skyung-ka* (chough). Mi-bdud rides on its head, and the rest of his circle on its body and wings.[331]

[329] This text is included in *Dra ba dmar nag gi rgyud*, nos. 381–404, Tibetan Bonpo Monastic Centre, Dolanji: 1972. The colophon reads: "Hris-pa gyer-med transmitted it to [the first of] the twelve *sku-gshen* (royal priests), [the last of which] transmitted it to lDa-zu bon-po. He transmitted it to Bla-chen khod-spungs (Eighth century) who transmitted it to the Lord *btsan-po* (king), who very carefully entrusted it to the Yum-sras lnga*." *Hris pa gyer med kyis sku gshen bcu gnyis la brgyud / des lda zu bon po la brgyud / des bla chen khod spungs la brgyud nas rje btsan po yang yum sras lnga la sho ra re'i gnyer rtad (= gtad) pa /.*

* The goddess Yum, who has her main earthly residence in gNam-mtsho lake, and her four mountain acolytes; see Part Three, section viii, pp. 317–322.

[330] These lines are found between nos. 389–394 of the text.

[331] This deity resides on a 5650 meter-high pointed mountain that is still called sKyung-ka. It is located twenty kilometers south of Nam-ra.

The same text provides an informative account of the origins of Mi-bdud and his struggle against the Hor of pre-Imperial times (nos. 386, ln. 8 to 388, ln. 9). The ethnonym Hor, as applied in Tibetan literature, is a fluid ascription defined by historical context. It often refers to the various Turco-Mongolian groups inhabiting regions north of Tibet, but it can also be used to designate Bodic peoples of northeastern Tibet, the Sogdians (Sog-po) of Imperial times, and possibly earlier Indo-European cultures as well.[332] The Bon text *g.Yung drung bon gyi rgyud bum* chronicles the conquering of a Hor kingdom in the time of Tibet's 25th king Phri-thob nam-brtsan (Bellezza 2001: 65, 66), while the *Drang don mun sel* provides an account of a pre-Imperial invasion of Pu-rang by the Central Asian Gar-log sog-po (Bellezza 2002a: 23, 24). A kinship between Tibet and Central Asia is asserted in the Bon ritual text *Mu ye pra phud phya'i mthur thug* (folio 16, lns. 3, 4), where it states that the prince of existence 'Thing-ge produced both the fully endowed Tibetans and [inhabitants of] Phrom (probably a region in Eastern Turkestan) with his wife Phywa-lcam dkar-mo.

The theme of Hor invaders in early times is also found throughout Upper Tibet in the oral tradition. In Ru-thog, there is a legend that speaks of an invasion of the region by a Hor group from Eastern Turkestan, who are often likened to Hor gur-dkar rgyal-po and bShan-pa sme-ru-rtse of the Ge-sar epic. During their tenure, they are said to have occupied Ru-thog's six most important pastures (Hor gser-po na-dmar), which include: 1) Ma mkha' gzhung (Ru-thog rdzong), 2) Gru-gu gzhung (lCags-sgang), 3) gTsang-dkar gzhung (rDo-dmar), 4) gZhung-pa-che (Re-co), 5) O gzhung (O-byang), and 6) Ṇo gzhung (O-byang). The Hor of the pre-Imperial period are also supposed to have occupied southern Ngam-ring where they worshipped three *lha-ri*. According to local accounts, the mountain of bKra-bzang was occupied by the deity Hor gyi dpal-bzang bshan-pa, and subsequently oath-bound by Gu-ru rin-po-che and renamed Chos-bdag bam-chung brag-btsan (a form of A-bse rgyal-po). Near bKra-bzang are the faint ruins of a hilltop fortress called Brag-la rdzong, which are attributed to the Hor. The rocky formation of Zang-zang lha-brag is also thought by local luminaries to have been

[332] The pre-Buddhist archaeological record demonstrates that Upper Tibet had cultural associations with Iron Age steppe cultures. See Bellezza 2002a.

a Hor *lha-ri* before it was subdued by Gu-ru rin-po-che. A rocky rib at Zang-zang lha-brag is said to represent the *lha-ri* in the form of a giant viper (now said to look like a heap of jewels), which was tamed by Gu-ru rin-po-che. Two *mchod-rten* were built to pin down the head of the poisonous snake. The third Hor *lha-ri* of Ngam-ring is a mountain at gCung ri-bo-che. Similarly, the ruins of ancient castles and fortifications at Dang-ra g.yu-mtsho are attributed in the oral tradition to the Sog-po (a Turco-Mongolian or Indo-European group) of ancient times (Tenzin Namdak 1997: 16; Bellezza 2001: 143, 144).

Dra ba nag po lda zor declares that Mi-bdud's father was born from an egg, which arose from the cosmogonic dew (para i). From his bloody birth, Mi-bdud appeared with an ax (*sta-mo*), ladle (*sgyogs*), sickle (*zor-ba*), and catapult (*skyogs*), important implements of the Tibetans since time immemorial (para ii). The description of Mi-bdud's attributes and accompanying animals bestow him with the mantle of a hunter and gatherer. The mythic historical place of the *bdud* is recorded in a cosmogony found in the 13th century *mKhas pa lde'u*. It records that there was a succession of nine different types of non-humans who ruled Tibet before people. It states that,[333] "In the second [period Tibet] was governed by Re-sde mgo-g.yag bdud. The name of his country was bDud-yul gling-dgu (Nine Realms bDud Country). In that time the tool was the ax, the ax of the enemy."

Dra ba nag po lda zor bsgrub goes on to relate that the bDud-bon practitioners. Kha-ta 'greng-yug was challenged by an individual from the country of Hor, named Hor 'dzum mul-bsam-pa lag-rings (para iii).[334] The Hor of historical times most frequently refers to the enormous territory occupied by the various Central Asian Turco-Mongolian

[333] See p. 224: *gNyis pa re sde mgo g.yag bdud kyis byas / yul gyi ming yang bdud yul gling dgu zer / sta re dgra sta dus der lag char byung /.*

[334] In a ritual text for Mi-bdud entitled *gNam lcags srog gi se bdar za 'gram che ba* (*Great Celestial Iron File for the Life-Force*), discovered by rMa-ston srol 'dzin (born 1092) (New Collection of Bon *bka' brten*, vol. 166, nos. 149–195), nos. 171, ln. 4 to 179, ln. 6, we read about another pre-Imperial Hor incursion into bDud-bon territory. This episode involves the Hor-pa Gyim-shang sta-re who stole the crow-black miraculous horse with the turquoise highlights from Bon-gshen sna-ro dbang. sNa-ro requested from the manifestation of gShen-rab, Hris-pa gyer-med, the exorcism of Mi-bdud and the *btsan* Hur-pa for filing away the life-force of enemies. Once the multi-tiered altar was set up (with articles such as hawk feathers, horned *gtor-ma*, *mda' dar*, and the blood of various animals), sna-ro had to visualize the tutelary deity of the body dBal-gsas, recite mantras and invite Mi-bdud and Hur-pa to the

groups. A historical Hor incursion with geographical parallels is the occupation of the Nam-ra region (Bar-tha) by the Mongols of the 13th century. However, as this account is set in a very early period, Hor might possibly denote areas occupied by Indo-European groups active near the northern and eastern fringes of the Tibetan plateau. A graphic description of Kha-ta's preparation for battle with the Hor-pa is given in the text (para iv). It includes his attire, battleaxe, face painting, and the sacrifice of a black sheep and yak of the *bdud*, customs of war prevalent since ancient times. The tale ends with the brutal execution of Hor 'dzum mul-bsam-pa lag-ring (para v). The text then resumes its function as an apotropaic ritual:

(i) In the language of Zhang-zhung smar: *ge-rgya ge-ta gran-la this*. In the language of Nam-pa ldong: *'u mo dgra 'dul mthu-mo-che*. In the language of Me-nyag-spa: *lda-zor ye 'phrom lda gur drongs*.[335] In the language of Imperial Tibet: 'Byams-pa khrag-mgo, the protector *dgra-lha*. From the sphere of primordial emptiness there appeared radiance and dewdrops. From the dew appeared an egg. From inside this charcoal black egg [appeared] a black elephant[336] *bdud* with a brown bear head. He had hair of turbulent[337] blood. He had rows of fangs of sharp swords. His name was Khri 'dul thang-po.

(ii) From his union with Na-lcam[338] mgrin-rings, the daughter of Na-ros 'dus-pa; from inside the belly, a *bdud* was born. He appeared from

ritual. At that time, visions of tigers, leopards, black bears, and brown bears appeared at the site, the minions of the two deities. Also, apparitions of Hor and Mon armies were entertained. After Mi-bdud and Hur-pa agreed to help sNa-ro defeat the enemy, they prescribed a ritual performance for invoking the deities in which a mandala was painted with the blood of a wild carnivore and the blood of someone who had died a violent death (*gri-khrag*). Various articles were placed on the mandala and many mantras were recited. This led to deity-inspired visions of thunder, hail, many yaks, sheep, and soldiers in armor, as well as a hawk and wolf. Afterwards, a ritual for slaughtering the enemy was carried out in which a *lingga* (effigy) with the name of the Hor-pa, Gyim-shang was placed inside a *tha-ram* (triangular enclosure). The execution occurred when his *bla* (soul) appeared as seven bay-colored yaks inside the *tha-ram*. Finally, twelve *gshen-po* (Bon priests) officiating at the ritual uprooted the lineage of Gyim-shang by placing a wolf skull inside the *tha-ram*, while reciting spells, and making meat and blood offerings to the *lha-srin sde-brgyad*.

335 These three opening lines introduce the deity but their precise meaning is unclear. Me-nyag and Nam-pa-ldong are ancient regions in the northeast portion of the Tibetan plateau.

336 *Glang* could also denote an ox.

337 *sKyin 'dangs*. This indicates phenomena like a raging river or the tempestuous sea.

338 Na is a main lineage or clan of the *bdud*.

the awful bloody belly. His name was Mi-bdud 'byams-pa khrag-mgo. In his hand he was grasping the *bdud*[339] of wood, the ax. On his back he was carrying the *bdud* of water, the great ladle. Overhead was soaring the great hawk, the *bdud* of [other] birds. He was riding astride a great otter, the *bdud* of fish. From his mouth he was spitting sickles, the *bdud* of plants. From his chest he was throwing a great catapult, the *bdud* of stones. He was appointed the *bdud* and executioner. He showed bad omens to the hateful enemy.

(iii) Around that time, in the country of the slaughter Gra-ma grubcu, in the castle of the slaughter 'Degs-pa gsang-ring, the father was the *bdud-gshin*[340] 'Byams-pa, the mother Chud-za[341] thing-ril, and their son the bDud-bon Kha-ta 'greng-yug. In the Hor country of 'Byams-pa[342] gling-bzhi there was the father rKu and the mother sDang.[343] The son of the union of these was Hor 'dzum mul-bsam-pa lag-rings, who challenged the bDud-bon person [Kha-ta]. He had stolen the black horse of the *bdud*.

(iv) The bDud-bon Kha-sta[344] 'greng-yug tied the black turban of *lda*[345] on his head. On his body he wore the black *ber* (cloak) of *lda*. On his body he held the great ax of *lda*. He rode astride the dark brown horse of *lda*. On his wrathful face he applied blood and charcoal. He butchered the black sheep of the *bdud* with white on top of its head and the bay-colored *thang-rol*[346] yak of the *bdud*. He supplied provisions to his black *bdud* [army]. He blew the whelk of the *bdud* in the sky. He dispatched the chough, the bird of the *bdud*, the killer of birds.[347] He mobilized the posse of 'Byams-pa khrag-mgo. The bDud-bon Kha-ta said [to him], "Hor 'dzum mul-bsam-pa lag-rings has challenged the black *bdud*. They are opposing me the Bon-po. The enemy and thief have risen up against the Bon [po]. Send the bird of bad omens to the enemy."

(v) Having spoken these words 'Byams-pa khrag-mgo set out. He landed at the castle of Hor 'dzum-yul. From his mouth he flung fierce *thog-*

339 This *bdud* and the following occurrences in the paragraph have the connotation of a blighter or disturber.

340 A particularly virulent type of being associated with death, but which can ally itself with human beings.

341 A clan or lineage of *bdud*.

342 In other accounts of Mi-bdud we find instead the Hor country of rNgam.

343 These appear to be paternal and maternal clan or lineage names.

344 Spelling derived from text.

345 This word has a close association with the *bdud* lineage and their possessions, however its exact signification has been lost.

346 The meaning of the expression *thang-rol* is unclear. Customarily the yak of the *bdud* are black in color.

347 In Tibetan folklore, it is said that the chough's beak is poisonous and that a pair of them can repulse an eagle.

rdo[348] and struck the heart of Hor 'dzum mul-bsam-pa lag-rings. He consumed the root of his life-force, the trophy of the *bdud*. He drank his heart blood, the heroic beverage of the *bdud*. The *bdud* ravenously devoured his head. With his skin they made the regimental banner of the *bdud*. Today, we send the *bdud* to the enemy. Cast down upon the enemy the bird of bad omens.

Transliteration of the Dra ba nag po lda zor bsgrub thabs *excerpt*

(i) zhang zhung smar gyi skad du na / ge rgya ge ta gran la this / nam pa ldong gi skad du na / 'u mo dgra 'dul mthu mo che / me nyag spa'i skad du na / lda zor ye 'phrom lda gur drongs / spu rgyal bod kyi skad du na / 'byams pa khrag mgo dgra lta'i (= lha'i) mgon / dang po stong pa'i ngang nyid las / de las 'od dang zil par chags / zil pa las ni sgong ngar 'gril / sol sgong nag po'i nang shed nas / bdud kyi glang nag drel (= dred) mgo can / skyin dang (= 'dangs) khrag gi ral pa can / chu gri gtam (= gris gtams) pa'i mche ba can / ming ni khri 'dul thang po yin /

(ii) de dang na ros 'dus pa'i bu mo ni / na lcam mgrin rings ma dang bshos pa las / gdug byed khrag gi drod (= grod) par byung / drod pa'i nang nas bdud byung ba / mi bdud 'byams pa khrag mgo yin / shing bdud sta mo lag na thogs / chu bdud sgyogs chen rgyab tu khur / bya bdud khra chen lam (= klad) na lding / nya bdud sram chen 'og na zhon / rtsi bdud zor ba kha nas 'phren / rdo bdud rjogs (= skyogs) chen thugs las 'phren / dgra bo bdud dang gshed du bskos / sdang ba'i dgra la ltas ngan phob /

(iii) dus dang srid pa de tsam na / gshen (= gshin) yul gu (= gra) ma gru bcu na / gshin mkhar 'degs pa gsang ring na / pha ni bdud gshin 'byams pa lags / ma ni chud za thing ril ma / bu bdud bon kha ta 'greng yu (= yug) lags / hor yul 'byams pa gling bzhi na / pha ni rku la ma ni sdang / de gnyis 'tshos shing bshos pa'i bu / hor 'dzum mul bsam pa lag rings des / bdud bon sku la do ru bsdos / bdud rta nag po gug ron phrogs (= 'phrogs) /

(iv) bdud bon kha ste (= sta) 'greng yug gis / lda thod nag po dbu la bcings / lda ber nag po lus la gyon / lda sta kha chen lags na thogs / lda rta bra bo 'og na zhon / ngo dbal khrag dang sol bas

[348] A kind of celestial missile.

byugs / bdud lug nag po spyi dkar dang / bdud g.yag khams pa thang rol bshos / nag po bdud la thang shar bkye (= bkyes) / bdud gser gu lang gnam du bus / bdud bya skyung ka khra ru bkye / 'byams pa khrag mgo ra mdar spran / bdud bon kha ta'i zhal na re / hor 'dzum mul bsam pa lag rings gis / nag po bdud la do bsdos so / bon po bdag la 'gran btsal lo / bon la dgra dang rku dar na / dgra la ltas ngan bya phob cig /

(v) de skad zhal nas gsungs pa dang / 'byams pa khrag mgo chas te song / hor 'dzum mul (= yul) gyi mkhar la babs / zhal nas gdug pa'i thog rdo 'phangs / hor 'dzum mul bsam pa lag rings snying la brgyab / srog rtsa bdud kyi dpa' ltang gsol / snying khrag bdud kyi dpa' skyems byas / 'go (= mgo) bo bdud kyis rngam zas byas / g.yang bzhi bdud kyi ru mtshon byas / de ring dgra la bdud sbod na / dgra la ltas ngan bya phob cig /

vi) *Rol-pa skya-bdun*

Rol-pa skya-bdun/rkya-bdun/skyabs-bdun are a group of seven *btsan* horsemen who reside in various places of Upper Tibet. The most prominent among them are the A-dmar rol-pa of sGer-rtse and Da-dben rol-pa of gZhung-pa ma-mtshan, in dGe-rgyas county. The name Rol-pa skya-bdun may mean the 'Seven bTsan Emanations' in the Zhang-zhung language but there is no confirmation of this. For this study, there is a translation of what may be the only extant text for the Da-dben rol-pa entitled *Chos skyong gnod sbyin chen po'i gsol kha'i sgrub thabs* (*The Method of Propitiation of the gSol-kha of the Great gNod-sbyin Dharma Protector*). The copy available to me came from the well-known scholar of gZhung-pa ma-mtshan (Shangs rdo-ring), Tshe-ring chos 'phel (now living in exile). Unfortunately, this text does not have a colophon and no author is attributed to it. From the literary style, the nature of its contents and the authoritative tone of the language employed, this would seem to be a centuries old *gsol-kha* text written by a great Buddhist master. Instead of applying *skya/rkya*[349] in the appellation of the deity the word *skyabs* (protector) is used instead, one of a number of Buddhacizing elements in this work.

[349] Scholars opine that this word might be the Zhang-zhung lexical term for *btsan* or *rje* (lord). See Hummel 2000, pp. 29, 32, 53; Martin (in personal communication).

In typical Buddhist fashion, the Da-dben text begins with a visualization and the invoking of an Indian Buddhist protector (para i). Also in customary Buddhist style, when invoking the Rol-pa skya-bdun, it describes them as faithful sons of Gu-ru rin-po-che (para ii), stressing this point repeatedly throughout the text. The offerings ensemble to the deity is conceived in the form of a castle, another convention used in the propitiation of protective deities (para iii). As in other *gsol*-kha texts, these offerings are given to forge a close relationship or afflatus with the deities (paras iii–vi). The deities in the guise of fierce warriors are then vividly described (para vii). The Rol-pa skya-bdun are accorded the role of protector of King Khri-srong lde'u-btsan's (755–797) lineage (para viii), as they are in the text *Gung thang gdung rabs* where they are referred to as personal protectors (*'go-ba'i sku-lha*) of the King (Diemberger 1998: 47). The *gsol-kha* text carefully elaborates upon the oath the Rol-pa gods took with Gu-ru rin-po-che and what kinds of activities this entails (paras viii, x). These are interspersed with panegyrics (*bstod-pa*) that extol the terrific appearance and power of the deities. As with other deities inhabiting mountains, the Rol-pa skya-bdun are referred to as *dgra-lha* (paras x, xii).

The next section of the text is the wrathful signaling component (*drag-bskul*), which consists of forceful, vibrant descriptions of the deity's mountain residence and his various names and attributes (paras xi–xiii). By the composition of eloquent verses it is hoped that the Rol-pa skya-bdun will respond to the ritualists' petitions and carry out their requests. The description of their abode is rendered in the ancient bardic style, with the productive use of trisyllabic indicators at the end of each verse (paras vii, xi). These inspirit otherwise pedestrian verses. As is typical of the *gsol-kha* genre, the Rol-pa skya-bdun appear in the form of truculent native warriors. Among the names of the Rol-pa skya-bdun is the one given to him by the legendary *gshen* sTag-la me 'bar, Lha-btsan dgra-lha rgyal-po (para xii). Once the deities have positively responded and are well-ensconced in the castle of offerings the ritualists have assembled, they are asked to completely destroy all enemies (paras xiv, xv). In this sequence to exorcise both spirit and mortal enemies, the deities are called on again and again to slaughter those who hate and injure the ritualists and their allies. As we have seen, the destruction of malevolent forces is precisely the manner in which the Rol-pa deities are employed by the spirit-mediums. The *Chos skyong gnod sbyin chen po'i gsol kha* ends in the conventional fashion, with a call to the deities to carry out all the activities they have been entrusted with:

(i) *Hri' padma tsanḍa maha krodha ha ya ghri wa hu lu hu lu hung phaḍ.*[350] You yourself appear as the *yi-dam*. From the seed syllable in the heart radiate red light rays resembling a hook [and using them] instantaneously conduct the wild Rol-pa skyabs-bdun with their haughty circle, the *sde-brgyad* assembly resembling a red cloud carried by the wind, from Zangs-thang dmar-po[351] to this place.[352]

(ii) *Kyai*! On the other side, over there in the western direction, in the country of the *btsan* Zangs-thang dmar-po, are the obedient sons of Padma dbang (Gu-ru rin-po-che), the great *btsan* Rol-pa skyabs-bdun. Your body color is virtually red. In your hands you hold a banner and lasso. You have an assembly of haughty *sde-brgyad*. Come here, come here, come to this place.

(iii) *Bhyo*! *Bhyo*! Inside the red castle of the *btsan* are flesh and blood, and objects in inconceivable [numbers]. All these beautiful offerings are for your delight. Stay with your oath on this immaculate carpet. *Kyai*! The activities and deeds of the holy men Rol-pa brothers are inconceivable [in their wonder]. You are the obedient ones of Padma dbang. We praise you oath-holding owner of treasures. We offer you this pure body ablution. In your beneficence have a close relationship with the sponsors and us.

(iv) We offer you pure incense covering like a cloud, flowers, lamps, excellent fragrances, delicious foods and the melodies of musical instruments. In your beneficence have a close relationship with us.

(v) *Kyai*! To you holy men, masters of life, the fearsome Rol-pa and your seven assemblies, [we give] pleasing articles of flesh, red blood, *gtor-ma* amassed like a mountain, limpid nectar impounded like a lake, *rakta* (blood) and beverages filled like a tank, offerings to behold, sundry articles spread out like stars, drums, flutes and [other] musical instruments played like thunder, and the [full] range of songs, melodies and harmonies.

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[350] This is a mantra for the horse-headed Buddhist protector rTa-mgrin, a deity with all the *lha-srin sde-brgyad* under its control. Several other Sanskrit mantras found in the first part of the text have been omitted from the translation.
[351] It is common to find red plains called Zangs-thang dmar-po in the vicinity of the various resident mountains of the Rol-pa skya-bdun.
[352] Paragraph i and ii terminate with mantras reminding the Rol-pa deities of their oath. Paragraph iii ends with a mantra for purification of the offerings. See transliteration of text.

(vi) We fulfill the wishes of the seven oath-holding brothers. We fulfill the wishes of the blazing circle of *btsan*. We fulfill the wishes of the *sde-brgyad* allies. We fulfill the wishes of the oath-holding protectors of wealth. We fulfill the wishes of the attendants of the four activities.

(vii) *Bhyo*! There is a red castle of the *btsan ldems se ldems*.[353] There are red silk regimental banners *pu ru ru*.[354] There are red flags *yengs se yengs*.[355] The haughty ones are shooting arrows *sprengs se spreng*.[356] There are butcher servants *rol lo lo*.[357] They are signaling by whistling sounds *ldir ri ri*.[358]

(viii) *Bhyo*! We fulfill the wishes of the great *btsan* king. In the presence of Slob-dpon padma you promised to remember your oath. As per your oath, equally protect the order of the lordly (lineage) of Khri-srong lde-btsan and all the lineages of oath-holding yogis. Cut the lineage of rivals. Destroy the hordes of heretics. Do not transgress the adamantine oath of the tantric practitioners. We have entrusted you in charge, increase your power. Do not be careless or dither. Do not follow [others] for food or be lured by [their] blandishments. If we have crossed you we make amends. Protect us like your beloved son and grandson. Carry out the activities entrusted to you.

(ix) Praising: *Hung*! In ancient times, the one with the oath appeared from the power of karma and prayer for the protection of the victorious doctrine. We praise you obedient powerful one, the one known as the great *gnod-sbyin* protector of the Dharma. Your body blazes like a terrific epoch [ending] fire. Grimacing, upper teeth bared, you fiercely stare with wide-open eyes. By your spear and lasso you strangle and slay the *ru-tra*.[359] We ourselves praise you, executioner of the oath-breakers.

(x) In the presence of the followers of the wisdom-holding Padma [dbang], according to what you promised, do not forget your oath. Protect the knowledge-holders and our lineages, the practitioners of Dharma, in a manner according to the directive of the mighty oath, when the *lha* and *srin* were gathered together with a single aspiration in the central room of the splendid bSam-yas mi 'gyur.[360] We give you

[353] *lDems se ldems* conveys that the castle is shimmering in brilliant light.
[354] *Pu-ru ru* shows that the banners are rippling in the wind.
[355] *Yengs se yengs* apparently indicates a waving motion.
[356] *sPrengs se spreng* portrays that the arrows are being shot directly into their targets.
[357] *Rol lo lo* conveys a chopping and cutting motion.
[358] *lDir ri ri* is the onomatopoeia for a very sharp or booming sound.
[359] Sanskrit: *rudra* (terrific, horrible, dreadful). In this context refers to enemies of religion. Hummel (2000: 34) equates this term with *srin-po* or *sri*.
[360] Tibet's first Buddhist monastery located in the Lho-kha region, in what is

offerings, protectors of the Dharma, to be our enduring *dgra-lha*. Protect the Buddhist doctrine, and propagate the Buddhist doctrine and practitioners. Conquer obstacles and kill the enemy who hates us. Protect the circle of Dharma practitioners and their relatives. Repulse foreign armies. Carry out the miraculously accomplishing four activities.

(xi) Wrathful Signaling: *Kyai*! Over there on the other side, at the margin of the slates and meadows, where the mountain and plain spread apart, there is a copper formation in the sky *gzengs se gzeng*.[361] On its summit is a purplish vulture *lings se ling*.[362] On its flanks are deer and onagers *sha ra ra*.[363] At the base there are blue waters *zu lu lu*.[364] On the top there is a castle.[365] It is a magenta-colored copper castle *ldems se ldems*. It has niches of gold *tams se tam*.[366] It has doors of conch *khrigs se khrigs*.[367] It has locks of iron *khro lo lo*.[368] It has steps of lapis lazuli *sha ra ra*.[369]

(xii) Inside the castle resides the *lha-btsan*, the king of the *dgra-lha*. You are one man with many names. In the center of bSam-yas, Slob-dpon padma 'byung-gnas gave you a name. You were called gNod-sbyin chen-po rtsi-dmar. At Ra-ba 'jigs, the Bon-po sTag-la me 'bar[370] gave you a name. You were called Lha-btsan dgra-lha rgyal-po. At sTod mnga' ris, the *bodhisattva* Zla-ba rgyal-mtshan[371] gave you a name. You were called gNod-sbyin rgyal-po yang-le-ber.[372]

(xiii) You have a fearful dark red-colored body. Your body is clad in a red gold cuirass. On your head you wear a red gold helmet. With

now Gra-nang county. Construction began during the reign of King Khri-srong lde-btsan and it was completed circa 825 AD.
[361] *gZengs se gzeng* conveys that the formation is very pointed and jagged.
[362] *Lings se ling* depicts that the wings of the vulture are flapping up and down.
[363] *Sha ra ra* probably conveys that the animals are darting in all directions.
[364] *Zu lu lu* portrays that the waters are choppy.
[365] Castle (*sku-mkhar*) is a metaphor for the mountain peak on which the Rol-pa skya-bdun reside.
[366] *Tams se tam* shows that the niches are perfectly regular and four-sided.
[367] *Khrigs se khrigs* depicts that the doors are perfectly regular and well finished
[368] *Khro lo lo* conveys the clanging sound that the locks make.
[369] *Sha ra ra* shows that the steps are evenly spaced and neatly stacked on top of one another.
[370] sTag-la me 'bar was a *gshen* practitioner of primordial times who did Phur-pa practice in order to subdue his demonic brother Srin-po dha-sha ghri-ba. This *srin-po* was killing people and decimating the countryside. sTag-la me 'bar was reborn as a Bon *yi-dam*, who is specially propitiated to remove curses. There are white, red and black forms of this tutelary deity.
[371] A lama who was active ordaining bKa' brgyud-pa teachers in the middle of the 12th century.
[372] Yang-le-ber is a Zhang-zhung language title used for Bon deities such as Hur-pa. It also forms part of the name of gNod-sbyin yang-le-ber, the *chos-skyong* (protector or religion) of bSam-yas, better known as Pe-har.

your right hand you thrust your spear towards the enemy. With your left hand you strangle the enemy with your lasso. A golden sash with jewels is tied around your waist. You wear multi-colored *sag-lham*[373] on your feet. You have a necklace of lapis lazuli and coral. On your right side is a tiger [skin] quiver and on your left side a leopard [skin] bow case. You ride a tan and turquoise blue horse. One hundred thousand cavalry regiments surround you. You pull from behind the red dogs of the *btsan.*

(xiv) *Bhyo*! *Bhyo*! Go to the enemy, *bhyo*! Depart, depart, sally forth into battle. Augment your army by holding aloft the regimental banner. Lead your army of *btsan* to the country of the enemy. Eradicate the present enemy. Exterminate potential enemies. Utterly destroy the enemy who hates us. When we call do not ignore us. When we signal do not come slowly. When we unleash you do not come without power. Conquer and utterly destroy the enemies and obstructers who maraud us. Carry out the activities entrusted to you.

(xv) Invocations are: *Kyai*! At the pure, miraculous, self-existent castle is the very fierce and powerful *gnod-sbyin.* The red color of your body is like blood *ya la la.*[374] You have a blood color and fangs *tsigs se tsigs.*[375] You are the angry, powerful, extremely miraculous general of all the savage *gnod-sbyin.* With the [spear] banner in your right hand you pierce the hearts of the enemy. With the lasso in your left hand you strangle the enemy. You ardently desire the life-force of the oath-breaker enemies. Please receive these activated oath ingredients and nectar. Avert all bad luck, bad omens and enemies. Please dispel the great adversities and anxieties of the yogis. Always remove obstacles and realize our necessities. Carry out all activities entrusted to you by the yogis.

Transliteration of Chos skyong gnod sbyin chen po'i gsol kha *text*

(i) hri' padma tsaṇḍa maha kroddha (= krodha) ha ya ghri wa hu lu hu lu hung phaṭ / rang nyid yi dam du gsal ba'i thugs ka'i sa bon las 'od zer dmar po lcags kyu lta bur 'phros pa las btsan yul zang (= zangs) thang dmar po nas / btsan rgod rol pa skyabs bdun la / 'khor dregs pa sde brgyad tshogs dang bcas pa sprin dmar rlung gis bskyod pa bzhin du skad cig gis gnas 'dir spyan drangs / badzra sa ma ya dza dza /

[373] An ornamental riding boot usually made from patterned mule-skin.
[374] *Ya la la* conveys a movement like rolling sea waves pushed by a breeze.
[375] *Tsigs se tsigs* depicts that the fangs are sharply pointed.

(ii) kyai / phyogs phyogs de ni pha gi na / nyi ma nub phyogs pha gi na / btsan yul zangs thang dmar po na / padma dbang gi bka' gnyan (= nyan) pa / che btsan rol pa skyabs bdun ni / phal cher sku mdog dmar po la / phyag na ba dan zhags pa bsnams / sde brgyad dregs pa'i tshogs dang bcas / tshur sbyon (= spyon) gnas 'dir sbyon (= spyon) / shu la tri badzra sa ma ya rdza /

(iii) bhyo bhyo / btsan mkhar dmar po'i nang shed na / sha khrag longs spyod bsam mi khyab / yid 'ong spyan gzigs kun nas mdzes / dam tshig gtsang ma'i gdan la bzhugs / sa ma ya tiṣhṭha lhan / kyai / skyes bu rol pa mched bdun ni / 'phrin las mdzad pa bsam mi khyab / padma dbang gi bka' nyan pa / dam tshig gter bdag khyod la bstod / gtsang ma'i sku khrus 'di 'bul lo / bdag dang yon gyi bdag po la / thugs rje dbang gis nye bar mdzod / Armgha bi shuddhe swa' ha' /

(iv) gtsang ma'i bdug spos sprin ltar bstibs / me tog snang gsal dri mchog dang / zhal zas snyan pa'i rol mo 'bul / thugs rje'i dbang gi nye bar mdzod / puṣhpe / dhu pe / Ā lo ke / gandhe / nai we dya / shapta pu dza ho /

(v) kyai / skyes bu srog gi bdag po ni / 'jigs byed rol pa sde bdun tshogs / khyod la dgyes pa'i longs spyod ni / sha khrag dmar gtor ri ltar spungs / zag med bdud rtsi mtsho ltar skyil / rakta'i yon chab rdzing ltar gtams / spyan gzigs longs spyod skar ltar bkram / rnga gling rol mo 'brug ltar sgrogs / glu dbyangs snyan pa'i tshogs dang bcas /

(vi) dam can mched bdun thugs dam bskangs / btsan 'khor 'bar ba'i thugs dam bskangs / sde brgyad gdong zla'i thugs dam bskangs / dkor srung dam ldan thugs dam bskangs / las bzhi pho nya'i thugs dam bskangs /

(vii) bhyo / btsan mkhar dmar po ldem (= ldems) se ldem (= ldems) / dar dmar ru mtshon pu ru ru / ba dan dmar po yengs se yengs / dreg pa'i mda' 'phen sprengs se sprengs / las byed bshan pa rol lo lo / shug (= bshug) pa'i 'bod sgra ldir ri ri /

(viii) bhyo / che btsan rgyal po'i thugs dam bskangs / slob dpon padma'i spyan snga ru / thugs dam zhal bzhes de dgongs la / khri srong lde'u btsan rje rigs dang / rnal 'byor dam ldan brgyud par

bcas / dam tshigs gcig tu skyong ba dang / sku la sdo ba'i rigs brgyud chod / log lta'i sde dpung 'cham (= cham) la phob / sngags 'chang rdo rje'i dam ma 'gal / bcol lo gnyer ro mthu rtsal bskyed / yal yol bri khol ma mdzad cig / ngos srung zas phyir ma 'breng mdzod / thugs dang 'gal ba de skong la / bu sdug tsha bo bzhin du skyong / bcol ba'i 'phrin las sgrub par mdzod /

(ix) bstod pa ni / hung / sngon tshe rgyal ba'i bstan pa srung ba'i phyir / las smon mthu las grub pa'i dam tshig can / chos skyong gnod sbyin chen po zhes grags pa'i / bka' sdod stobs ldan khyod la bdag stod do / rab 'jigs bskal pa'i me ltar 'bar ba'i sku / khro gnyer bzhin du Am gtsig sdang mig bgrad / mdung dmar zhags pas ru tra 'ching shing sgrol / dam nyams gshed ma khyod kyi thugs dam bskangs /

(x) rig 'dzin padma'i rje 'brangs spyan mnga' (= snga) ru / ji ltar zhal bzhes thugs dam ma g.yel zhig / dpal gyi bsam yas mi 'gyur bar khang du / smon lam gcig bsdus lha srin 'dus pa'i tshe / bka' yi thugs dam gnyan po ji bzhin du / rigs 'dzin bdag dang rgyud par bcas pa yi / dam chos sgrub la tshul bzhin skyong ba dang / gtan gyi dgra ltar (= lha) chos skyong khyod gsol na / sangs rgyas bstan srung bstan dang bstan 'dzin spel / bar chad bgegs thul sdang ba'i dgra bo bsod (= sod) / chos 'khor gnyen skyong mtha' yi dmag dpung bzlog / 'phrin las rnam bzhi lhun gyis 'grub par mdzod /

(xi) drag bskul ni / kyai / phyogs phyogs bdag (= dag) kyang pha gi na / g.ya' dang spang gi mtshams shig na / btsan yul ri thang phyed pa na / zangs brag gnam du gzeng (= gzengs) se gzeng / rtse la rgod smug lings se ling / logs la sha kyang sha ra ra / rtsa la chu sngo (= sngon) zu lu lu / sku mkhar de yi steng shed na / bsre (= bse) mkhar smug po ldems se ldems / gser gyi ba gam tam (= tams) se tam / dung gi sgo mo khrig (= khrigs) se khrig / lcags kyi sgo lcags khrol lo lo / mu men them skas sha ra ra /

(xii) sku mkhar de yi nang shad na / lha btsan dgra lha'i rgyal po bzhugs / mi gcig po la ming mang po / slob dpon padma 'byung gnas kyis / bsam yas dbus su mtshan gsol ba / gnod sbyin chen po rtsi dmar zhes / bon po stag la me 'bar gyis / ra ba 'jigs su mtshan gsol ba / lha btsan dgra lha'i rgyal po la / byang sems zla ba rgyal mtshan gyis / mnga' ris stod du mtshan gsol pa / gnod sbyin rgyal po yang le ber /

(xiii) sku mdog dmar nag 'jig (= 'jigs) pa la / sku la gser khrab dmar po gsol / dbu la gser rmog dmar po gsol / phyag g.yas mdung dmar dgra la 'debs / g.yon pa'i zhags pas dgra bo bcings / gser skad (= sked) rin chen sked la bcings / zhabs la sag lham khra bo gsol / mu men byi ru'i do shal can / stag ras (= ral) g.yas la gzig shubs g.yon / chibs su gro bo g.yu sngon chibs / rta dmag 'bum sde'i tshogs kyis bskor / btsan khyi dmar po rol du 'khrid /

(xiv) bhyo bhyo / de ni dgra la bhyo / cho cho de ni dmag la phyo / dmag dpung skyed la ru mtshon phyor / btsan dmag dgra bo'i yul du drongs / snga dgra dar ba rtsad nas chod / phyi dgra sems pa drung nas phyungs / sdang byed dgra bo rdul du rlog / bos pas tshe na snyan ma sra / bskul ba'i tshe na bang ma bul / 'bad (= rbad) pa'i tshe na mthu ma chung / bdag la rnags (= brnag) pa'i dgra dang bgegs / dbang du 'dus la thal bar rlog / bcol ba'i 'phrin las 'grub par mdzod /

(xv) gsol kha ni / kyai / rang bzhin rnam dag 'phrul gyi gzhal yas na / gnod sbyin dmar po gtum byed mthu bo che / sku mdog dmar po khrag ltar ya la la / khrag mdog mche ba dmar po tsig (= tsigs) se tsigs / gnod sbyin gdug pa kun gyi stong dpon mdzad / drag shugs mthu ldan stong dpon sgyu 'phrul can / g.yas pa'i ba dan dgra bo'i snying la gzer / g.yon pa'i zhags pas dgra bo'i ske la 'chings / dam nyams dgra bo'i srog la rngam par mdzod / dam rdzas bdud rtsi 'bar ba 'di bzhes la / byur dang ltas ngan thams cad dgra la bzlog / rnal 'byor chag che nyam nga bzlog tu gsol / rtag tu 'gal rkyen sel la mthun rkyen 'grub / rnal 'byor bcol ba'i 'phrin las 'grub par mdzod /

Another set of Rol-pa skya-bdun that function as possessing deities are the A-dmar rol-pa of Ri-dmar, sGer-rtse. These deities are the object of a text recently composed for the Karma bka' brgyud monastery of Sag-the (located in sGer-rtse) entitled *Libations for the Wild bTsan Rol-pa skya-bdun for the Miraculous Realization of the Objects of Desire.*[376] This genre of *gser-skyems* (libation offerings) represents the

[376] *bTsan rgod rol pa skya bdun gyi gser skyems 'dod don lhun grub*, a two-folio text kindly obtained from the monks of Sag-the monastery. Its colophon reads: "The aforementioned text, on behalf of the diligently performing lama Karma bshad-sgrub kun-khyab, who earnestly requested it, was spoken by the leader of religious performances Karma bde-chen*. It was written down by the scribe Blo-bzang ye-shes at the religious center of 'Og-min mtshur-mdo."

furthest semantic shift in compositions for indigenous deities away from worldly concerns towards a Buddhist doctrinal perspective. Rather than expounding upon the personality and functions of the Rol-pa skya-bdun, the text serves as a mouthpiece for Buddhist tantric thought and practice. Nevertheless, the ancient structural components of the *gser-skyems* are still present: the offering of *gtor-ma* and libations, a litany of the deity's circle, and requests for aid of a practical nature.

The text begins with instructions on how to arrange the offerings needed in the ritual. They are of the usual type and include *gtor-ma*, grain, beverages, and small replicas of livestock (para i). The libations become a metaphor for the realized wisdom of the ritualists, and they are first offered to the lamas and tantric systems of the Karma bka' brgyud (para ii). The libation offering to the Rol-pa skya-bdun is amalgamated to one for higher protectors with an acknowledgment of the oath that Gu-ru rin-po-che gave the *btsan* (para iii). This is followed by offerings made to the deities in Rol-pa's circle, located throughout sGer-rtse and adjoining regions (para iv). Reference is made to the mate of Rol-pa, the lake sTong-mtsho, located 40 kilometers east of the mountain. This is representative of the ancient mythology of Upper Tibet with its mountain-lake dyads, as still propounded by the spirit-mediums of the region. The final portion of *Libations for the Wild bTsan Rol-pa skya-bdun for the Miraculous Realization of the Objects of Desire* deals with the requests made to the deity (para v). They are of the type we are already well acquainted with, requesting health and happiness for people and livestock. An appeal is also made to the deities to help the younger generation maintain their religious faith:

> (i) If you desire to present *gtor-ma* offerings and *gser-skyems* to the Rol-pa skya-bdun [do as follows:] In a pure vessel, a tray of copper [or some other precious substance, place] a red *gtor-ma* and numerous *thebs-kyu*[377] around it. In front [of the red *gtor-ma* place] a white *gtor-ma* with ornaments,[378] circled by yaks, sheep, goats and other animals. Nicely arrange various grains, silk and whatever else is available for offering.

* A notable figure of mTshur-phu monastery (1919–1998). He was instrumental in rebuilding mTshur-phu in the 1980s.

377 Variant spelling of *mTheb-kyu*; small dough sculptures.

378 *rGyan*. Refers to butter medallions and other types of ornamentation made from butter.

> In an abbreviated form, make offerings of fresh [beverages], and put into [a container] whatever types of grain are available. Purify by: *Ram yam kham*. Bless by these syllables.
>
> (ii) *Hung*! *Hri*![379] We offer the first portion of the nectarous libation of wisdom to the knowledge-holder lamas of the telepathic, sign and oral transmissions and particularly, to the successive root lamas of the bKa' brgyud adepts of Dwags-po.[380] We offer by the first portion of the nectarous libation of wisdom to the *Peaceful and Wrathful Buddha Performances of the bKa' brgyad*,[381] and to the completed nine mandalas of the Bla-ma dgongs 'dus,[382] and to the Father Tantra, Mother Tantra and Non-dual Tantra.[383]
>
> (iii) We offer by the first portion of the nectarous libation of wisdom particularly to dBang-chen rta-mchog rgyal-po (Very Powerful Excellent Horse King)[384] and the great wild *btsan* Rol-pa skya-bdun, the excellent obedient ones of Padma thod 'phreng rtsal (Powerful Lotus One with the Garland of Skulls).[385] We offer by the first portion of the nectarous libation of wisdom to the splendorous Phyag-na rdo-rje, who in ancient times consecrated and oath-bound the obedient and haughty chiefs, and charged them as caretakers of the treasures of Padma sambha.
>
> (iv) We offer by the first portion of the nectarous libation of wisdom to the only wife of the great wild *btsan* g.Yu-sgron sman-mo (Turquoise Lamp Female sMan) of sTong-mtsho and her outer circle of *klu* and *sman*, and to Khyung-mo ri-nag (Female Khyung Black Mountain)[386] and sMug-po g.yu-mtsho (Purple Turquoise Lake). We offer by the first portion of the nectarous libation of wisdom to g.Ya' nag rtse-dgu (Black Slates Nine Peaks),[387] Mendze mgo-nag mtsho, and particularly to g.Ya' ma mu-tig (Slate Pearl), A-ru,[388] and the angry red rock

379 Sacred syllables used to call a deity's attention.

380 This refers to the all the main bKa' brgyud sects excepting the Shangs-pa bka' brgyud.

381 *bDe gshegs zhi khro sgrub pa*. This is a reference to a group of tantric texts. See Dung-dkar 2002, pp. 157, 158.

382 A rNying-ma tantric cycle rediscovered by Sangs-rgyas gling-pa (1340–1396).

383 These are the three main tantric systems of the bKa' brgyud-pa.

384 Epithet of the Buddhist *yi-dam* rTa-mgrin.

385 Epithet of Gu-ru rin-po-che.

386 A prominent mountain in the range north of sTong-mtsho, Tong-mtsho township, sGer-rtse county.

387 A *yul-lha* of Tshwa-kha township, dGe-rgyas county.

388 These are two sacred mountains in northern sGer-rtse, at 34° latitude. A-ru gangs is a glaciated 6300 meter-high glaciated peak, while g.Ya' ma mu-tigs (commonly known as g.Ya' sbra-khrigs; 'Rows of Slate Black Yak Hair Tents') is a black rocky outcrop.

formation *lha*, the sovereign of rGod-tshang (Vulture Nest),[389] etc. We offer by the first portion of the nectarous libation of wisdom to the holy place of Gangs-lcam gur-lung sman gyi rgyal [mo] (Queen of the Sman Tent Valley Mountain Lady),[390] lCags-khra (Iron Hawk), and the [other] *gzhi-bdag* of the right, left, upper, lower, sunny, and shady places of the country of sGer-rtse. We offer the first portion of the nectarous libation of wisdom particularly to sGrub-brgyud chos 'khor bstan-dar gling,[391] and the protector of the country, the great *lha*, bKra-shis 'od 'bar[392] and his consort, son, minister and outer circle.

(v) By virtue of having offered in this way the ocean of nectar, may the Doctrine of the Buddha be propagated, and may the monks be well. May the doctrine of the teachings and meditation greatly increase. May rain fall in a timely fashion, and may our harvests and livestock always be abundant. May human and livestock diseases be pacified, and may wild carnivores not have designs to prey but the mind of the *bodhisattva*. May the young boys and girls of this country have minds with faith in Buddhism. May there be the auspiciousness of the increasing good omens of happiness. (Give *gtor-ma* offerings at a pure place.)

Transliteration of the bTsan rgod rol pa skya bdun gyi gser skyems *text*

(i) rol pa skya bdun la mchog gtor gser skyems 'bul bar 'dod na / zang (= zangs) sder ram snod gtsang mar / dmar gtor 'khor thebs kyu grangs mang dang / mdun du dkar gtor rgyan ldan g.yag lug ra gsum rnams gzugs 'gros kyis bskor pa'i 'bru sna dar zab sogs ci 'byor pa'i bshams la / bsdu na / phud rgod 'bru sna gang 'byor btab la / ram yam kham gyis bsangs / 'bru gsum gyis byin rlabs /

(ii) hung hri' / dgongs brda snyan brgyud rig 'dzin bla ma dang / khyad par dwags po'i bka' brgyud grub thob kyi / rim byon rtsa brgyud bla ma thams cad la / ye shes bdud rtsi gser skyems phud kyi (= kyis) mchod* / bde gshegs zhi khro sgrub pa bka' brgyad dang / bla ma dgongs 'dus dkyil 'khor dgu rdzogs dang / pha brgyud (= rgyud) ma brgyud (= rgyud) gnyis med brgyud (= rgyud) sogs la
* Subsequent occurrences of this line are designated: / *** /

(iii) / *** / khyad par dbang chen rta mchog rgyal po dang / padma thod 'phreng rtsal gyi bka' nyan mchog / btsan rgod chen po rol pa skya bdun la / *** / sngon tshe dpal chen phyag na rdo rje yis / dbang bskur dam btags bka' nyan dregs pa'i gtso / padma sambha gter gyi gnyer kha gtad

(iv) / *** / btsan rgod chen po'i lcam cig stong mtsho ma / g.yu sgron sman mo yang 'khor klu sman dang / khyung mo ri nag smug po g.yu mtsho la / *** / g.ya' nag rtse dgu mendze mgo nag mtsho / khyad par g.ya' ma mu tig A ru dang / brag dmar lha 'khrug rgod tshang mnga' bdag sogs / *** / gnas mchog gangs lcam gur lung sman gyi rgyal / lcags khra la sogs sger rtse'i yul khams kyi / g.yas g.yon phu mda' nyin srib gzhi gnas bdag / *** / khyad par sgrub brgyud chos 'khor bstan dar gling / yul skyong lha chen bkra shis 'od 'bar gyi / btsun mo sras blon yang 'khor tshogs bcas la / *** /

(v) de ltar bdud rtsi rgya mtsho phul pa'i dges / sangs rgyas bstan pa dar zhing dge 'dun bde / bshad sgrub bstan pa rab tu rgyas pa dang / char chu dus babs lo phyugs rtag tu legs / mi nad phyugs nad zhi zhing gcan gzan gyi / gnod 'tshe'i bsam sbyor med cing byang sems ldan / yul phyogs de yi khye'u pho mo rnams / blo sems dam pa'i chos la mos pa dang / phan bde'i dge mtshan rgyas pa'i bkra shis shog / mchod gtor gtsang sar 'phul /

In the Bon tradition, it is generally believed that the Rol-pa gods are identical with the Rol-po, deities of purported Zhang-zhung origin. The Rol-po belong to the *bdud-btsan* class and, like their Buddhist counterparts, they are fierce horse-riding protectors prevalent in Upper Tibet. The Rol-po brothers are found in the circle of Mi-bdud 'byams-pa khrag-mgo, an important Bon protective deity. In a Mi-bdud ritual offering text attributed to a Zhang-zhung period adept,[393] a description of four of the Rol-po deities is given. In this

[389] This must be a reference to one of the *btsan* protectors (Gangs-ri lha-btsan or the 'Bar-ba spun-dun) of Ma-mig monastery, Ma-mig township, at which rGod-tshang brag is situated. For information on this site see Bellezza 2001, p. 119.
[390] This is the 6800-meter tall mountain most commonly known as Shel-gangs lcam on the border of Nag-tshang, 'Brong-pa and mNga' ris. It is variously attributed by *'brog-pa* to the circle of rTa-rgo, Gangs-ri lha-btsan or A-dmar rol-pa. See Part Two, section ii, p. 80 (fn. 47).
[391] Sag-the monastery, g.Yu-gtog township, sGer-rtse.
[392] The special protector of the Buddhist master Bo-dong paṇ-chen (1375–1451) and the *chos-skyong* of many monasteries. An excellent study of this deity is found in Hazod 1998.

[393] This excerpt is found in an unnamed text of the *Dra ba dmar nag gi rgyud* volume (Tibetan Bonpo Monastic Centre, Dolanji, 1972, nos. 251–305), nos. 295,

text, the descriptions of the Rol-po are furnished as a prelude to invoking their enemy-destroying capabilities, a ritual convention often followed by the spirit-mediums as well:

> (i) Also, the father Thog-rgod lam-pa mated with Glog-ma gya-gyu and the four Rol-po horsemen were born. [The first is] Ri-bdud dkar-po (White Mountain bDud) who holds a *thog-lcags* ax. Split the enemy asunder from the top of the head to the heels. [The second is] 'Dzin-pa zhags-thogs bdud (bDud Catcher Holder of the Lasso). You wear a brown bear-skin *slag* (robe) on your body. You hold a lasso with a bell of iron attached. Seize the enemy by the neck. [The third is] Ro-khur gri-thog bdud (Corpse Carrier bDud Holder of the Knife). You are a noble iron [colored] man with copper [colored] hair on your head. Abduct the enemy. [The fourth is] Yul-bdud khug-pa. At rDo-ring dmar-po there are the sounds of humans[394] *lhang nge lhang*,[395] and his *rkyang* is tied *zhung nge zhung*.[396] You are the respected butcher, holder of the knife. We invoke and praise the four Rol-po horsemen. Bring the enemy here!

In a *mdos* ritual text for Mi-bdud entitled *Dra-ba gsang-mdos*,[397] we again find mention of the Rol-po bothers, this time in a group of seven, the same number as is found among the Rol-pa deities. In this text, instead of horses the deities have wolves as mounts. Like the rTa-rgo brotherhood of mountain deities their ensemble of offerings includes *bshos* (ritual cakes) of the *bdud* and *btsan*, as well as birds, sheep, yaks, and horses of the *bdud*. As with the Rol-pa skya-bdun of the spirit-mediums, the Rol-po brothers provide for the immediate needs of the ritualists and their clients:

ln. 3 to 296, ln. 1. The colophon reads: "Composed by Hris-pa [gyer-med] and discovered at gSang-brag rgya-bo by rMa-ston srol 'dzin (born 1092). It became the sharp weapon* of the Ya-ngal [clan]." A version of these passages are also found in the text *gNam lcags srog gi se bdar za 'gram che ba* (New Collection of Bon *bka' rten*, vol. 166, nos. 149 to 195), no. 189, lns. 3–7. The name of this text (*The Great Celestial Iron File of the Life-Force*) refers to its power to file away at the life-force of enemies.

* Sharp weapon is a metaphor for the induction of this ritual into the religious practice of the Ya-ngal clan.

394 These sounds are either made by the deities and their retinues, or by their victims.

395 *Lhang nge lhang* is an onomatopoeia that conveys very distinct sounds.

396 *Zhung nge zhung* probably depicts that the onagers are pacing about.

397 See *Dra ba gsang mdos* (*Dra ba dmar nag gi rgyud*, Tibetan Bonpo Monastic Centre, Dolanji, 1972, nos. 425–433), no. 431, lns. 8–11. The end of this text informs us that: "Composed by Hris-pa gyer-med, who gave it to Dran-pa nam-kha, and through his lineage it was passed on to bZhur-ru dpon-po. He gave it to Yang-ston dpal-bzang."

> (ii) We fulfill the guides of the armies of Mi-bdud, the *ge-ta*[398] servants, the seven *bdud-btsan get-ta* Rol-po, on the lower tiers of Ri-rab.[399] You have a fearsome manner and blood-thirsty appearance. In your right [hands] you hold spears, and you ride iron [colored] wolves. We offer you an agreeable *mdos* and copper *rgyang* (ornamental accoutrements) with seven sky blue embellishments. We fulfill your wishes by the *bshos* of the *bdud*, the *bshos* of the *btsan*, the bird of the *bdud*, the sheep of the *bdud*, the yak of the *bdud*, and the horse of the *bdud*. We fulfill your wishes accordingly. Purify our defilements and trespasses. Pacify obstacles and the misfortune of accidents.

As we saw in the text for the Rol-pa skya-bdun of gZhung-pa ma-mtshan, the Rol-pa deities are the terrific foes of all those who oppose Buddhism. Similarly, in another ritual text for Mi-bdud we find the seven Rol-po brothers as implacable opponents of the enemies of Bon (8):[400]

> (iii) Mi-bdud 'byams-pa khrag-mgo dispatches the guides of activities, the seven *ge-ta* Rol-po workers. You ride seven blue wolves. In your right [hands] you hold celestial iron *sni-tshe*.[401] Cut the paternal lineages of the *gran* (oath-breaker enemies). In your left [hands] you hold the cutter scythe. Cut the maternal lineages of the enemies. Please protect the Doctrine of the *gshen-bon*.

Transliteration of the Rol-po texts

(i) yang pha dang yab thog rgod lam pa dang / glog ma gya gyu bshos / rol po rkya bzhi byung / ri bdud dkar po de / thog gi sta re bsnams / dgra bo spyi nas rting du gshog / 'dzin pa zhags thog (= thogs) bdud / dren (= dred) slag sku la gsol / lcags kyi dril zhags bsnams / dgra bo'i skyes (= ske) nas zungs / ro khur gri thog (= thogs) bdud

398 *Ge-ta* appears to be the Zhang-zhung language equivalent of *bdud*. This is supported by Hummel (2000: 32)

399 Ri-rab in this context refers to a model of the world mountain, a kind of stepped platform used in *mdos* rituals.

400 See *Mi bdud 'byams pa khrag 'go (= mgo) yi / thugs sgrub kyi gzhung bzhugs so* (*The Fundamental Performance of the Central [Ritual] of Mi-bdud 'byams-pa khrag-mgo*) (*Dra ba dmar nag gi rgyud*, nos. 497 to 525), no. 518, lns. 5–8. The end of the text states, "bDud-bon Kha-ta 'greng-yug (appears to be the text's composer) gave it to Hris-pa gyer-med, who gave it to [the first of] thirteen royal priests, [the last of which] gave it to lDa-zu bon-nag. He gave it to Bla-chen Khod-spungs (Dran-pa nam-mkha')." It is not clear if these royal priests (*sku-gshen*) were from Zhang-zhung or the Bod regions of central Tibet.

401 *sNi-tshe* is the Zhang-zhung word for spear.

/ lcags kyi mi po la / zangs kyi dbu skra can / dgra bo rkus la shog / yul bdud khug pa de / rdo ring dmar po la / mi skad lhang nge lhang / rkyang brtags zhung nge zhung / shan pa gri thogs lags / rol po rkya bzhi bso / dgra bo nyur du khug /

(ii) ri rab bang rim tha ltag la / mi bdud dmag gi sna 'dren pa / las byed ge ta bskang ba ni / bdud btsan ge ta rol po bdun / 'jigs tshul rngam pa'i cha byad can / mdung dar thogs cing lcags spyang zhon / khyed la mthun pa'i mdos 'bul ba / zangs rgyang 'thing (= mthing) phrod bdun dang ni / bdud bshos btsan bshos bdud bya dang / bdud lug bdud g.yag bdud rtas skang / khyed kyi thugs dam bskang ba bzhin / bdag gi nyams grib byang bar mdzod / glo bur bar chad zhi bar mdzod /

(iii) mi bdud 'byams pa khrag mgo yis / las la mngag pa'i sna 'dren ni / las mkhan ge ta rol po bdun / lcags spyang sngon po bdun la zhon / g.yas pas gnam lcags sni tshe thogs / gran gyi pho rgyud chod la shog / g.yon pa gcod pa'i zor ba thogs / dgra bo'i mo rgyud chod la shog / gshen bon bstan pa bsrung du gsol /

vii) *Dam-can mgar-ba nag-po*

Dam-can mgar-ba nag-po (Black Blacksmith Oath-Holder) is the famous archetypal blacksmith figure of Tibet. According to local sources, his main residences are two mountains in Gar-sde, southwest of gNam-mtsho: Dam-can A-jo, a large snow mountain in the Trans-Himalaya, straddling the dPal-mgon and sNye-mo county line; and Dam-can mgar-nag, a mountain of black talus (*rdza-ri*) in close proximity. These two mountains, located in the Yar-gling area of sGar-sde, host the deity's celestial castle called Pha-wang long-pa'i sku-mkhar (sp.?). The most important shrine for Dam-can mgar-ba nag-po is found in the valley of Me rdo-lung, in Bar-gling, the middle portion of sGar-sde. This shrine (*rten*) consists of a round black iron-ore boulder approximately two spans across. According to local folklore, this stone is the anvil of Dam-can. He is said to have dropped it at its present location while being chased by gNyan-chen thang-lha, after he had an illicit affair with gNam-mtsho. Another local myth says that Dam-can was appointed the chief blacksmith of the epic hero Ge-sar because he was so skillful that he could manufacture a thousand *rdo-rje* in a single night. Due to this feat, at his

appointment, he was conferred the name rDo-rje legs-pa (Adamantine Goodness).

As we have seen, Dam-can is often considered synonymous with the famous protective deity rDo-rje legs-pa.[402] Indeed, in a rDo-rje legs-pa text handed down to the *lha-pa* Pho-bo lha-dbang from his father, one of the many names of this deity is mGar-ba nag-po. This text, entitled *A Summary of the Activities Entrusted to the Salubrious Adamantine Holy Man Oath-Holder*, was written by Klong-chen-pa rab 'byams bzang-po (1308–1363).[403] It is designed to be used in conjunction with an offering text. The articles presented to rDo-rje legs-pa are of the kinds with which we are already familiar. Klong-chen's text also contains a comprehensive resume of the kinds of activities that the ritualist expects of the deity. These faithfully reproduce the functions of the deity in the tradition of spirit-mediumship.

A Summary of the Activities Entrusted to the Salubrious Adamantine Holy Man Oath-Holder begins with the Buddhist appellations of rDo-rje legs-pa, the protector of the world and owner of treasures (para i). This is followed by a general description of the awe-invoking appearance of the deity (para ii). His *pho-nya* (attendants) are wolves and bears, the kinds of animals that figure prominently in the pantheon of remedial spirits of the spirit-mediums. The text states that one of the names of rDo-rje legs-pa is mGar-ba nag-po and that, like the mountain deities, he is a *dgra-lha* (para iii). It also states, in an ecumenical spirit, that he is the protector of both the Bon-po and Buddhists, as well as the leader of many professions (para iii). Of special interest is the list of boons expected of the deity after he has been presented with his offerings (paras iv, v). These extend to the health-oriented, social, and military spheres of life, and are apotropaic and fortune-bestowing in nature:

[402] Or his primary emanation. A review of rDo-rje legs-pa is found in Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, pp. 154–159.

[403] The colophon reads: "This is *Dam can skyes bu chen po rdo rje legs pa phrin bcol bsdus pa*, the omniscient speech dominator of Klong-chen-pa rab 'byams bzang-po, which are blessed words. It has been faithfully copied without the corruption of modification by others." (*dam can skyes bu chen po rdo rje legs pa la phrin bcos* (= *bcol*) *bsdus pa 'di ni kun mkhyen ngag gi dbang po klong chen pa rab 'byams bzang po'i gsungs byin rlabs can gzhan bcos kyis ma bslad par dag par phab pa'o /*). This manuscript was obtained from the spirit-medium Pho-bo lha-dbang. A xylographic edition of the same text is found in the Library of Tibetan Works and Archives collection, and was used to check spellings.

(i) *Ho!*[404] You are the excellent holy man of the world, king of knowledge, life-owner of the western realm of the setting sun, and protector of all the yogis. You are the owner of jeweled treasures, rDo-rje legs-pa, rDo-rje bde-ldan (Adamantine Blissful One), rDo-rje 'bar-ba (Adamantine Blazing One), rDo-rje khyung-gshog rtsal (Adamantine Powerful Khyung Wings), rDo-rje thig-le rtsal (Adamantine Potent Essence).

(ii) You have a fearful dark red colored body. Smoke billows from the hair on top of your head. With your three eyes you fiercely stare at the enemy. Sparks spread from your full beard. Your pointed fangs [are bared] as you laugh "*ha ha*". You have a *rdo-rje* with nine spokes in your right hand. With your left hand you consume the hearts of the enemies. On the upper part of your body you wear a human-skin dress. On the lower part of your body you wear tiger-skin apparel. You sling [over your shoulder] a garland of a snake with human skulls. You ride a white lioness or a bay-colored goat. Your favorite consorts surround you and the *lha-srin sde-brgyad* ministers and their retinues, an assembly of ten million killers, surround you. You dispatch iron [colored] wolf, black bear and brown bear messengers.

(iii) In China [you are known as] A-bse chen-po.[405] In Khams [you are known as] gNod-sbyin chen-po. In Tibet [you are known as] A-jo chen-po (Great Big Brother), mGar-ba nag-po, Mon-pa nag-po, Ga'u nag-po (Black Receptacle), Ser-skya nag-po, the chief of the circle of the 360 brothers, and the *dgra-lha* of all holy men. You are the protector of all the Buddhists and Bon-po, the great general, the great chief of the bandits, the great leader of businessmen, the great abbot, the great councilor, the great worker, and the great killer.

(iv) [To you] and your outer manifestation messengers and attendants and their circles we give and offer. Preserve the good things. Dispel the bad things. Accomplish our aims. Fulfill our aspirations. Do not send diseases to people. Do not send diseases to livestock. Do not send humiliation or contentious speech. Do not send calumny or epidemics. Do not send enemies, thieves or vandals. Moreover, protect us when we stay at home. Defend and protect us when we travel. See us through

[404] An exclamation for attracting the attention of the deity.
[405] A-bse/Abswe, the Bon king of the *btsan*, has a red complexion and hair. In his right hand, he holds a lasso made from a human intestine. In his left hand, he has a red *mdung-dar* and owl. On his right side he has a tiger-skin quiver, and on his left side a leopard-skin bow case. He also has a snake sash wrapped around his waist, iron boots, and a fox or musk deer mount. See the text *gTso mchog dgra 'dul chen po las bon skyong sde bzhi brag btsan A bswe rgyal ba bskul pa* (New Collection of Bon *bka' brten*, vol. 186, nos. 778–787).

and back from fearfully dangerous roads. Save us when we go across rivers. When we go to trade be our businessman. When we go to war be our general. When we plunder be our bandit leader. When we have a dispute with the enemy suppress the opponent. When we are not equal [to others] permit us to be equal. When we are equal [to others] let us emerge duly superior.

(v) Carry out the activities entrusted to you. Show us the signs of accomplishment. Reveal your joyful form. Bring forth power and miracles, and increase our dominance and wealth. Vouchsafe our standing and fame. Consummate our good luck and happiness.

Transliteration of Dam can skyes bu chen po rdo rje legs pa *text*

(i) ho / 'dzam bu'i gling gi skyes mchog / rig pa can gyi rgyal po / nyi ma nub phyogs kyi srog bdag / rnal 'byor yongs kyi srung ma / rin chen gter gyi bdag po / rdo rje legs pa / rdo rje bde ldan / rdo rje 'bar ba / rdo rje khyung gshog rtsal / rdo rje thig le rtsal /

(ii) sku mdog dmar nag 'jigs su rung ba ral pa'i rtse nas du ba phyur ba / spyan gsum sdang mig dgra la gzigs pa / sma ra Ag tshom me stag 'phro ba / mche ba zangs yag ha ha rgod pa / phyag g.yas rdo rje rtse dgu gsol ba / g.yon pas dgra snying zhal du gsol ba / sku stod zhing chen g.yang gzhi gsol ba / sku smad stag gi sham thabs gsol ba / sbrul dang thod pas se ral 'phyar ba / seng ge dkar mo 'am ra skyes khams pa la chibs pa / thugs kyi dgyes sde btsun mos bskor ba / bka' blon lha srin sde brgyad dang bcas pa / sgrol ging bye ba'i tshogs kyis bskor ba / pho nya lcags spyang dom dred 'gyed pa /

(iii) rgya yi A bse chen po / khams kyi gnod sbyin chen po / bod kyi A jo chen po / mgar ba nag po / mon pa nag po / ga'u nag po / ser skya nag po / mched 'khor sum brgya drug cu'i gtso bo / skye bo yongs gyi dgra lha / ban bon yongs kyi srung ma / dmag dpon chen po / jag dpon chen po / tshong dpon chen po / stong dpon chen po / mkhan dpon chen po / gral dpon chen po / las mkhan chen po / sgrol ging chen po /

(iv) pho nya yang sprul phyag brnyan dang bcas pa la gsol lo / 'bul lo / mchod do / legs pa chos shig / nyes pa bzlog cig / bsam pa sgrubs shig / re ba skongs shig / mi la na tsha ma btang (= thongs)

/ phyugs la god kha ma btang (= thongs) / kha smra dang gleng brjod ma btang (= thongs) / mi kha dang dal yams ma btang (= thongs) / dgra rkun dang 'tshe ba ma / btang (= thongs) gzhan yang gzhi la 'dug na legs par srungs shig / byes su 'gro na mgon skyabs mdzod cig / lam 'phrang 'jigs par skyel bsu gyis shig / chu la 'gro na sgrol 'don mdzod cig / tshong la 'gro na tshong dpon gyis shig / dmag la 'gro na dmag dpon gyis shig / jag la 'gro na jag dpon gyis shig / dgra dang rtsod na pha rol gnon cig / mi mnyam pa dang mnyams su chug cig / mnyams gnyis gong du legs par thon cig /

(v) bcol pa'i phrin las sgrubs shig / bsgrub (= grub) pa'i rtags phyungs shig / dgyes pa'i zhal ston cig / mthu dang rdzu 'phrul skyed cig / mnga' thang dang 'byor pa spel cig / snyan pa dang grags pa sgrogs shig / bkra shis dang bde legs phun gsum tshogs par mdzod cig /

In one Bon tradition, mGar-ba nag-po is one of the four acolytes of the Indian planetary god gZa' bdud ra-hu-la, a very ireful treasure guardian. The three other acolytes of gZa' bdud are dGe-bsnyen chen-po, bTsan-rgod hur-pa and sKyong-ma bcu-gnyis. These five deities together are called sNa-khrid mched-lnga.[406] They are conductors of offerings to the higher deities and are involved in wrathful religious activities.

A ritual for the destruction of the visible and invisible enemies (including human, doctrinal, demonic and disease types) of Bon practitioners based on Dam-can mgar-ba nag-po, is found in a text entitled *Invocations of the Bon Defender Oathholder, Rider of the Tiger, of the Four Groups from Excellent Chief Great Conqueror of Enemies.*[407] It will be recalled that some of the spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet rely on possession by mGar-ba nag-po for exorcising especially destructive demons and malevolent forces. The tenor of this kind of exorcism is maintained in this text whereby the deity is called upon to dispatch enemies in the starkest of terms.

The text begins and ends with instructions for the execution of the ritual (paras i, vii). As with the *lha-pa*, the horrific power of Dam-can can only be unleashed when absolutely necessary, and the ritualists must seek the sanction of the higher deities for its application (para i). During the séance, this is effectively provided by the patrons of the trance ceremony such as the Buddhas and Gu-ru rin-po-che. As with the propitiation of many other Bon deities, as well as those conducted by the spirit-mediums, this ritual calls for the use of the drum and *gshang* (para i). The Dam-can exorcism follows the standard liturgical regime found in both the literary and oral traditions. This consists of offerings and praises preceding the requests/demands of the ritualist or spirit-medium. Another parallel between the literary Dam-can and the spirit-medium's possessing form of the deity is that various elemental spirits such as the *btsan* and *klu* assist him in his work (para v). A culminating rite in the exorcism is the use of *thun*, magical missiles of various types (para vi). Among the types listed are those of the wolf, tiger and a raptor, animals that commonly serve in the exorcistic activities of the spirit-mediums:

> (i) Then invoke Dam-can mgar-ba nag-po (Oath-Holder Blacksmith). Visualize yourself as the powerful victor dBal-chen ge-khod. Wear a black costume. Tie your hair on top of the head. Wave a [signaling implement][408] in the four directions. Imagine the mighty divine protectors loudly calling out to the enemy. Seek the testimony.[409] Attest to your innocence. Let [Dam-can] precisely know the obstructers that are to be targeted with maledictions. Entrust [Dam-can] with the enemy slaughtering activities. Prepare burning goat fat and *spos-dkar* (*Shorea robusta*). Sprinkle libations in the four directions. [Ask] Dam-can mgar-nag, rider of the tiger, and his retinue to come to this place. Play the drum and *gshang*, hold aloft a flag, blow the conch, and melodically chant. Say, "You must slay and devour this evil-doing enemy sinner." Then saying like this call [Dam-can] to action.

[406] Mention of Dam-can nag-po is found in the *sNa khrid mched lnga* text of the *sTag la sgrub skor* (New Collection of Bon *bka' rten*, vol. 143, nos. 1249 to 1252), no. 1251, lns. 5, 6. No authorship is given in this text.

[407] *gTso mchog dgra 'dul chen mo las bon skyongs sde bzhi dam can stag zhon bskul pa* (New Collection of Bon *bka' brten*, vol. 186*, nos. 789–794). No colophon is found in the text, and no author or finder is given. This text is part of a chapter dedicated to the four main acolytes of the Bon *yi-dam* gTso-mchog (Excellent Chief) (nos. 759–794). The other three members of the sDe-bzhi are Srid-pa'i rgyal-mo, sGra-bla-ma and A-bse.

* This volume is entitled *gTso mchog dgra brub*, and is primarily for repelling and eliminating the enemies of Bon practitioners.

[408] Used for getting the attention of the deities. Customarily it is an arrow or banner waved in conjunction with the burning of incense.

[409] *gZu-dpang-bcol*. In this action the ritualists seek the higher deities to serve as witnesses in order that the ritual is applied to legitimate ends. The ritualists must persuasively make their case to the deities.

(ii) *Kyai*! Dam-can mgar-nag, rider of the tiger, please come here with your entourage. You must slay and devour this evil-doing enemy sinner. *Hung*! From amid the expanse of space, inside the refulgent rainbow halo, is the terrifying figure of the great holy man, the furious obedient one of dBal-chen [ge-khod]. Miracle-holder mGar-ba nag-po you are the great wrathful, fierce, extremely powerful one who possesses the power of the three worlds. The color of your body is dark brown, the color of darkness. Your three eyes blaze like an epoch-ending fire. Your black tresses cover the land. You wear a dark-blue *ber-chen* (cloak) on your body. You hold savage weapons in your hands. You are the *bdud* butcher of the life-force cutting activities. You ride a heroic tiger mount. You are surrounded by a circle of one hundred thousand *ging*[410] and *bdud*. There are an inconceivable [number] of *ma-mo* in your outer circle.

(iii) Please come here with your entourage. Accept this *gtor-ma* of the injunction.[411] Send epochal disease and weapons to the oath-breaker hateful enemy. Send *than* (bad signs) and *ltas-ngan* (bad omens) to the enemy. Send [bad] light, [bad] sounds, loud noises, dancing apparitions of black darkness, many screaming red monkeys, fires ignited at night,[412] turning millstones,[413] and many [other] bad omens to the enemy. When Dam-can with his circle is dispatched extremely angry you spread forth *thag-thog-rgya*[414] emanations.

(iv) When you assume the manifestation of Dharma practitioners you have the brocade dress and regalia of a monk, and you ride a red lightning and cloud mount. When in a wrathful aspect you sometimes make clouds and cats magically appear, and also cut the life-force of sinners. Great master of the life-force, now the time has come [for your slaughtering activities]. dGe-bsnyen chen-po (Great Householder Vows Holder), now the time has come [for your slaughtering activities]. Be the companion of the virtuous ones. Also, befriend the oath-holders. In the daytime you wander in space. At night you couple with a many-headed young woman.

[410] A subsidiary class of Bon and Buddhist spirits of the *dpa' bo* (hero) type that characteristically wield swords. For further details see Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, pp. 278–280.

[411] *bKa' yi gtor-ma.* Given to deities who act as servants for the ritualists as remuneration for their activities.

[412] This refers to *'dre-me*, inauspicious fires that move across the land at night. They can be small globular masses that split into smaller parts and rejoin to produce larger fires.

[413] Millstones that turn without human intervention are commonly considered inauspicious.

[414] In this context, the meaning of this expression is unclear. It may denote an ancient type of Mongolian king?

(v) Infect the entire head and body [of the enemy] with disease-precipitating swelling, skin ulcers and *g.yen-pa*.[415] You keep company with whomever [you want]. Accompanied by the *bdud* bring this hateful evil-doing enemy [here]. Accompanied by the *btsan* [bring this hateful evil-doing enemy here]. Accompanied by the *rgyal-po* [bring this hateful evil-doing enemy here]. Accompanied by the *the'u-rang* [bring this hateful evil-doing enemy here]. Accompanied by the *klu* [bring this hateful evil-doing enemy here].

(vi) Spill out[416] the heart-blood of the oath-breaker enemy. Rain down weapons and disease on the oath-breaker sinner enemy. Send various bad omens to the enemy. Send the bad omens of the *ma-mo* of existence. Utterly destroy the enemy's people and wealth. Agitate the country of the enemy and ruin the castle of the enemy. Cut the life-force of the enemy and yank out the heart of the enemy. Comsume the flesh and drink the blood of the enemy. Partition the enemy's livestock and give to the *gshen*. The time has come to destroy the enemy horde. Carry out the activities of subduing the enemy. Poison *thun*.[417] Frog *thun*. Kite *thun*. Blacksmith *thun*. Dark blue iron wolf *thun*. Striped tiger *thun*.[418]

(vii) Thereafter, give first portions of offerings and *gtor-ma*, and scatter meat and blood. Imagine that [Dam-can] is swiftly targeting the enemy. This is the signaling text of Dam-can mgar-ba nag-po, the rider of the tiger.

Transliteration of the gTso mchog dgra 'dul chen mo *text*

(i) de nas dam can mgar ba nag po bskul ste / bdag nyid dbal chen ge khod dbang rgyal bskyed / gos nag po gyon / skra spyi bor bcing / phyogs bzhi g.yab mo 'drog / lha bsrung gnyan pos dgra la 'o dod 'bod par bsam / gzu dpung (= dpang) bcol / rang ma nyes pa la bden pa bdar / byad sna bgegs la mkhyen dpang gsol / dgra bo bsad pa'i las la bcol / spos dkar ra tshil gsur dud btang / gser skyems phyogs bzhi gtor / dam can mgar nag stag zhon 'khor bcas gnas 'dir gshegs su gsol / rnga gshang bkrol dar phyar dung 'bud dbyangs snyan bya / sdig can dgra bo'i las ngan 'di / nges par [sod] la ring par rol ces so la / de nas las la bskul te 'di skad do /

[415] A kind of pox.

[416] *Drang* could also mean that the blood is drunk.

[417] For more information on *thun* see Part Five, section vii.

[418] In the text this line is followed by six lines of spells.

(ii) kyai dam can mgar nag stag zhon pa / 'khor bcas gnas 'dir gshegs su gsol / sdig can dgra bo las ngan 'di / nges par sod la ring par bsgrol / dbal chen rngam pa'i bka' nyan pa / hung nam mkha'i dbyings kyi dkyil 'khor nas / 'od 'bar gzha' tshon gur nang na / skyes bu chen po 'jigs pa'i gzugs / drag shul che la stob po che / 'jig rten gsum gyis (= gyi) mthu rtsal can / mgar ba nag po rdzu 'phrul can / sku mdog smug nag mun pa'i mdog / spyan gsum skal pa'i me ltar 'bar / ral pa nag po sa gzhi khing (= khengs) / sku la mthing gi ber chen gsol / phyag na gdug pa'i mtshon cha bsnams / srog gcod las kyi shan pa bdud / chibs su dpa' bo stag la bcibs / 'khor du geng (= ging) bdud 'bum gyis bskor / yang 'khor ma mo bsam mi khyab /

(iii) 'khor dang bcas pa gshegs su gsol / bka' yi gtor ma 'di bzhes la / dam nyams sdang ba'i dgra bo la / nad dang mtshon gyi bskal pa thong / than dang ltas ngan dgra la thong / 'od dang sgra dang thug choms dang / mun pa nag po gar byed dang / sprel dmar mang po'i ku co btabs (= 'debs) / mtshan ma (= mo) me 'bud rang thag 'khor / ltas ngan mang po dgra la thong / dam can 'khor dang bcas pa rnams / shin tu 'khros shing sbad pa'i tshe / thag thog rgya yi sprul pa 'gyed /

(iv) chos 'khor sprul pa mdzad tsam na / btsun chas za' 'og khri btsun can / chibs su glog dmar sprin la bcibs / chos (= ched) 'ga' drag tu rdzus pa'i tshe / sprin dang byi la cho 'phrul ston / sdig can rnams kyi srog kyang gcod / srog bdag chen po dus la bab / dge brnyen (= bsnyen) chen po dus la bab / dge ba can gyis (= gyi) sdong grogs mdzod / dam tshig can gyi grogs kyang mdzod / nyin zhing bar snang mkha' la rgyud (= rgyu) / mtshan mo na chung mgo mang 'tshos /

(v) nad dang shu ba g.yen pa yi / mgo lus med par skrang nad gtong / khyod ni mi sdong dgu dang sdong / sdang ba'i dgra bo las ngan 'di / bdud dang sdong la khrid la shog / btsan dang sdong la khrid la shog / rgyal po dang sdong la khrid la shog / the'u rang dang sdong la khrid la shog / klu dang sdong la khrid la shog /

(vi) dam nyams dgra bo'i snying khrag drang / dam nyams dgra bo sdig can la / nad dang mtshon gyis (= gyi) char ba phob / ltas ngan sna tshogs dgra la thong / srid pa ma mo'i ltas ngan thong / dgra bo mi nor brdul (= rdul) du brlog / dgra yul sprug la dgra mkhar bshig / dgra srog chod la dgra snying phyung / dgra sha za (= zo) la dgra khrag 'thung / dgra nor chod la gshen la byin / dgra dpung bshigs pa'i dus la bab / dgra bo 'dul ba'i phrin las mdzod / dug thun / sbal thun / 'ol thun / mgar ba nag po thun / lcags spyang sngon nag thun / rgya stag khra bo thun /

(vii) ces phud dang gtor ma la dmar sbrings la / gtad pa'i dgra bo la las myur du byed par bsam mo / dam can mgar ba nag po stag zhon bskul pa'o /

viii) *gNam-mtsho phyug-mo*

Northwest of Lhasa (straddling 'Dam-gzhung and gNam-ru) is the largest body of water in Upper Tibet, gNam-mtsho (Celestial/Sky Lake). This sacred lake of 2000 square kilometers is the abode of the goddess gNam-mtsho phyug-mo (Celestial Lake Riches Lady), a powerful cosmogonic and protective deity. Bon-po and Buddhists alike actively worship gNam-mtsho phyug-mo, an important indigenous spiritual figure. In addition to her well-known tantric manifestations as a *mkha' 'gro-ma* and as the Buddhist rDo-rje phag-mo, she is propitiated in her more ancient form as a *mo-lha* (goddess of females) among the *'brog-pa* of Upper Tibet. As a *mo-lha*, she is instrumental in protecting the herds of livestock and insuring a good supply of milk.[419] As we have seen, while gNam-mtsho phyug-mo herself

[419] According to popular *'brog-pa* tradition, the three major *klu-mtsho* of Upper Tibet are: upper (western) regions—Ma-pham g.yu-mtsho; middle regions—Dang-ra g.yu mtsho; and lower (eastern) regions—gNam-mtsho phyug-mo. These three female deities constitute the most important *mo-lha* of Upper Tibet. Women generally worship them with offerings of milk and yogurt. Placation of the *mo-lha* is also believed to help prevent diseases caused by the *klu*. At auspicious times for the worship of the *klu*, such as *klu-thebs* (when the *klu* are believed to emerge near the surface of the earth), lamas were traditionally called to perform *klu-bum* and *klu-gtor* offering rituals, which are thought to benefit the *mo-lha*. The *mo-lha* are considered benefactresses and their concord brings an increase in milk production and the size of the herds. The *mo-lha* are believed to oversee all functions carried out by women including: 1) processing and storage of milk products; 2) keeping the hearth and cooking; 3) tending flocks, and especially young animals; 4) childbirth and the rearing of children; and 5) spinning, braiding and weaving. In *Lha lnga'i gsol mchod bsod nams dpal bskyed* by Za-hor sngags-smyon (see *bSang mchod phyogs sgrigs*, pp. 68 to 73) a description of the generic *mo-lha* is given (pp. 68 to 69). Selected verses read:

does not possess the spirit-mediums, a variety of her subsidiary forms do. At the behest of the primary goddess, her *klu-mo* and *sman-mo* retinue members effect cures and sponsor prophylactic and fortune-bestowing rituals such as the *klu-gsol* and *g.yang 'gugs*.

In the Buddhist tradition, gNam-mtsho phyug-mo is often envisioned as a scantily clad beautiful young goddess, holding a silver *me-long* and a *chu-srin rgyal-mtshan* (victory banner in form of water monster). Her main mount is a jewel-grasping dragon. An excellent description of the goddess is found in a text entitled *Realization of All Desires Invocations and Fulfillment of the Lake sMan of the North.*[420] This recently authored work was composed in the traditional *gsol-kha* style of literature, in lines of seven syllables. It contains four separate accounts of the appearance and activities of gNam-mtsho phyug-mo, which are more or less in accordance with the *'phrin-las* scheme. The requests made to the goddess are reminiscent of her mediumistic functions, and focus on the insurance of well being, good governance and the protection of religious values:

> (i) *Bhyo*! Sometimes Mother you have the beautiful face of a bedecked sixteen [year old maiden] who displays an attractive countenance. In your hands is a good crystal vase raining down medicinal nectar, which purifies the 404 diseases. Protect us from the 1080 *gdon*. Pacify all obstructions and obstacles. Repulse the sorcery of the savage barbarians. Sometimes you have a magnificent and happy aspect. You show the resplendent complexion of the golden sun. In your hand you hold a tray full of jewels. You increase the power and prowess of the kings and ministers. Increase our wealth and merit. Increase and multiply higher and higher our wisdom qualities and worldly and spiritual prosperity. Erect the victory banner of governance and dominion.

"The *mo-lha* is a beautiful and attractive young woman. She has a white body, one face and two hands. In her right hand is a *mda' dar* and in her left hand she holds a *me-long*. She wears a blue silk *ber* (cloak). She has a precious *thod 'ching* (hair-tie) and she is decorated with many types of ornaments. She rides on a doe, and variously displays the manifestations of a mother and *sru-mo* (maternal aunt)."

[420] *Byang gi mtsho sman rgyal mo'i gsol bskang 'dod rgu kun 'byung*. No author is given. The colophon of this four folio manuscript reads: "Again and again, I was encouraged through the occurrence of many signs and transmissions, in accordance with the oath [gNam-mtsho phyug-mo] promised in earlier times, to write this from the knowledge chest of self-formed space (memory and the nature of the mind) in the self-subsiding, self-arising [sphere of meditation]." (*sngon tshe dam tshig chad tho bzhin / brda' dang lung gis lan mang po / yang nas yang du bskul ba'i tshe / rang byung dbyings kyi rig sgrom las / cang grol rang shar bris pa yin*).

> (ii) Sometimes you have an alluring, smiling demeanor. Your [complexion] is as beautiful as the color of carnelian. In your hand you hold a hook of carnelian. You dominate the innumerable great worlds. Control all the kings, ministers and women. Regulate the dominion, government and wealth. Direct all the great sovereign prerogatives. Control phenomena and the mind. Sometimes you have the wrathful form of a *srin*, and with your black face you hatefully stare at the enemy. In your hand you hold aloft a celestial iron sword, which cuts the heads of the demonic foreigners. Sever the life-force of the oath-breakers and destroyers of the Doctrine. Slay all the enemy armies arrayed against us. Completely and instantaneously stop all misfortunes, disasters and degradation.

> (iii) Sometimes you have the manner of a fresh blue poppy with a wafting silken sandalwood scent. You are attired in various silk clothes. You have a necklace of lapis lazuli and jewel ornaments. You ride a miraculous aquatic horse with eyes of *gzi* (banded or engraved agate). By your running pace you circle the four worlds. In your hands you hold a sword and skullcap full of blood. You are the mistress of the treasures of the three planes of existence. Supervise the best treasure, the words of the Buddha. You are the great protector of the Buddhist Doctrine. Watch over all the Doctrine holders.

In the bardic version of the Bon text *Thang lha'i mchod bstod*, attributed to sTong-rgyung mthu-chen,[421] a description of gNam-mtsho phyug-mo is also given. In this account, gNam-mtsho assumes the mantle of a warrior as do other lake goddesses of Zhang-zhung:

> The wife of gNyan-chen thang-lha is gNam-mtsho phyug-mo. She is a blue turquoise woman. She wears a blue aquatic silk dress. She rides an aquatic *mdzo* (hybrid yak). She holds a blue regimental banner aloft. She leads an army of *klu*. Like rain, bring down the capability of attainment for the *gshen*.

Transliteration of the 'Dod rgu kun 'byung *excerpt*

(i) bhyo ma khyod res 'ga' mdzes pa'i zhal / bcu drug chas ldan bzhin mdangs ngom / phyag na shel gyi bum bzang las / bdud rtsi sman gyi char pa 'bebs / bzhi brgya rtsa bzhi'i nad rnams 'khrud / stong phrag brgyad cu'i gdon las srung / bar chad bgegs rnams zhi bar mdzod / kla klo gdug pa'i cho 'phrul bzlog / res 'ga' brjid cing dgyes pa'i nyams / gser gyi nyi ma'i 'od mdangs ngom / phyag na nor bu gzhong gang thogs / rgyal blon stobs rtsal rgyas par

[421] For bibliographic info see Part Three, section i, p. 173 (fn. 1).

mdzad / 'byor ldan bsod nams rgyas pa dang / ye shes yon tan srid zhi'i dpal / gong nas gong du 'phel zhing rgyas / chus srid rgyal mtshan bsgrengs (= sgreng)) bar mdzod /

(ii) res 'ga' 'dzum zhing chags pa'i gzugs / padma ra ga'i mdog ltar mdzes / phyag na padma'i lcakyu thogs / stong gsum stong chen dbang du mdzad / rgyal blon bud med dbang du sdud / chus srid dpal 'byor dbang du sdud / che rgu'i mnga' thang dbang du sdud / snang sems dbang du 'du bar mdzod / res 'ga' khro mo srin lus ma / ngo nag dgra la sdong (= sdang) mig blta / phyag na gnam lcags ral gri phyar / mtha' mi bdud kyi mgo bo breg / dam nyams bstan bshig srog rtsa gcod / pha rol rgol ba'i dpung kun sgrol / mi mthun chags che nyams (= nyam) nga kun / skad cig nyid la tshar gcod mdzod /

(iii) res 'ga' U dpal gzhon nu'i tshul / tsandan men dris dri bsung 'thul / sna tshogs dar gyi na bza' bklubs / nor bu'i rgyan dang mu men phreng / 'phrul gyi chu rta gzi mig chibs / rgyug pa'i bang gis gling bzhi bskor / ral gri thod khrag phyag na bsnams / srid gsum nor gyi bdag mo ste / zab gter bka' yi bya ra dang / sangs rgyas bstan pa'i srung ma che / bstan 'dzin yongs la mel rtse (= tshe) mdzod /

In a Bon text entitled *Entreaties of gNam-mtsho*,[422] written in the fashion of the Buddhist *gsol 'debs* genre (prayers and petitions to deities), gNam-mtsho phyug-mo is elevated to the status of a tantric goddess in which one can invest one's highest aspirations. We learn that she originates from the great Bon creatrix gNam-phyi gung-rgyal (para i), which appears to be implicit recognition of her cosmogonic qualities in the oral tradition of Upper Tibet. The text acknowledges gNam-mtsho phyug-mo's famous association with the Eighth century Bon adept sTong-rgyung mthu-chen (para i), who is recorded as practicing at gNam-mtsho do.[423] This is the large headland on the southeast side of the lake now known as bKra-shis do.

The iconography of the goddess of gNam-mtsho provided in *Entreaties of gNam-mtsho* is of Buddhist inspiration (para ii). She is

[422] *gNam mtsho gsol 'debs.* This manuscript of two folios in *dbu-med* script gives no author. It was collected at Shel-brag, in the Bon enclave of gNam-ru, northwest of gNam-mtsho.

[423] For biographical references see Karmay 1972, pp. 49, 72, 73; Bellezza 2000, pp. 59–61.

equated with *the mkha' 'gro-ma* of rMa-rgyud, the Bon Mother Tantra tradition (para ii). This amalgamation of a female environment-bound deity with the *mkha' 'gro* is a common Buddhist theological phenomenon. In the tradition of spirit-mediumship, it is reflected in both types of deities protecting the trance ceremony and residing in the *nang-gling*. gNam-mtsho phyug-mo is also tantamount with the leader of the twelve *bstan-ma/brten-ma* goddesses (para ii), a position she likewise holds in Buddhist ritual texts. As with other members of the indigenous pantheon, gNam-mtsho phyug-mo is mainly propitiated for immediate boons such as good health, wealth and long life (para iii). In the final few lines of *Entreaties to gNam-mtsho*, the noble ideal of benefit to all sentient beings is expressed. In the bardic-inspired texts for indigenous deities no such altruism is regarded for articulation:

> (i) *E ma ho!*[424] In ancient times, during the good epoch of existence, appeared the defender, the tutelary deity of the Primordial Buddha, gSang-mchog,[425] who miraculously appointed 124 *gnas-chen* (sacred places).[426] Among them is the one named gNam-mtsho phyug-mo. This lake was blessed by the All Knowing Victorious One (gShen-rab). We pray to this superior holy place. You are called mTsho-sman rgyal-mo, the emanation of gNam-phyi gung-rgyal, who was manifested from excellent qualities, by the great mother of space, Sa-trig Er-sangs. You were the wisdom *mkha' 'gro*, the secret consort of the excellent knowledge holder, sTong-rgyung mthu-chen.
>
> (ii) We pray to Shes-rab phyug-ma (Wisdom Riches of Space Lady). You reside at the headland of Ma-chags srin-mo (Unborn Srin-mo).[427] In the center is gNyan-chen gzigs-sngar mkha' 'gro-ma.[428] You have

[424] A common Buddhist interjection expressing wonder or amazement.

[425] gSang-mchog rgyal is the chief tutelary deity of the Ma-rgyud cycle. He is a manifestation of gShen-rab. His consort is Kye-ma 'od-mtsho.

[426] Denotes the sacred places of the Ma-rgyud cycle. There are actually 24 main places, each with five locational nodes, making a total of 120.

[427] The largest of three islands in gNam-mtsho, located in the northwest part of the lake. It is also known as Nang-do.

[428] This is the deity gNam-mtsho phyug-mo in her form as the central figure of the quincunx of Ma-rgyud figures known as the five *klu*-headed *mkha' 'gro*. She is also called gNyan-chen zil-ngar, and the locations of her four far-flung subsidiary *mkha' 'gro* are: east—Thang-shig-rgyal-ba; north—Yar-lha'i dpal-phyug; west—Drung gi stag-tshal; and south—'Phen-yul tsa-ri. They are offered *gtor-ma*, and asked to slaughter the assemblies of *bar-chad, bdud, gdon, dgra*, and *bgegs*. See the text *gSang ba gsang chen gsang sngags ma rgyud lha sum brgya drug cu'i sgrub gzhung*, discovered by Ghu-ru rnon-rtse (born 1136) at rTa-nag dung-phur (no. 476, lns. 1–3). This text is found in the *Ma rgyud thugs rje nyi ma'i sgrub skor gyi gsung pod* volume, nos. 315–489.

a white complexion and a conch *sbrul-thod-lding*.[429] You have a head ornament of five diadems and beautiful bone ornaments. You wear silk clothing and a garland of flowers. You have a *gri-gug* (chopper), skullcap full of blood, a trident, and regally sit with one leg folded and one leg extended (*gar stabs 'gying*). With great affection, grant us the capability for worldly and spiritual attainments. We pray to the miraculous mKha' 'gro-ma. The yellow, green, red and blue *mkha' 'gro* of the four cardinal directions have bone ornaments and garlands of skulls, and you hold *gri-gug* and skullcaps full of blood. We pray to the *mkha' 'gro* manifestations who protect the [Bon] Sangs-rgyas (Buddha) Doctrine by governing the four activities. You are the leader of all *brten-ma*, g.Yung-drung kun-grags (Swastika All Glory) at Lha-lcam chen-mo mkhan-dkar ri (Great Goddess Lady White Artemisia Mountain).[430]

(iii) We pray to the approximately 100 *mtsho-sman* and one hundred thousand *klu-sman*, the various groups of *mkha' 'gro* workers. By the efficacy of offering, praising and praying to you all, may the Swastika Doctrine be propagated generally, and specifically, let us accomplish according to our wishes. May demons and disease be pacified, and our life, merit, welfare and fame increased. Let us obtain the great empowerments directly,[431] and may enemies and obstructers be wrathfully dispelled. May the contamination of the six realms of living beings be purified, may our accumulation[432] be perfected, and the path of liberation opened. May all beings be enlightened at the space of Shes-rab phar-phyin (Wisdom Perfected Virtue).[433] Thus the prayers of gNam-mtsho are completed. May they be the ornament of the world, and improve the welfare and luck [of all beings]. *Sarba manga-lam* (May all be happy).

Transliteration of the gNam mtsho gsol 'debs *text*

(i) E ma ho / sngon tshe skal (= bskal) srid bzang po rdzogs (= chags) pa'i mgon / ye sangs rgyas pa'i yi dam gsang mchog gis /

[429] A kind of turban with a prominent snake head decoration.

[430] A sacred hill on the west side of gNam-mtsho. In the genealogical text *Pha rabs mthong ba kun gsal* it is mentioned (Lha-lcam kham-pa) in the origin myth of Tibet's great clans. See Part Three, section i, p. 203.

[431] *dBang-chen-dngos*. Usually these are religious teachings and attainments obtained directly and positively from lamas and tutelary deities. It can also just denote the capability for worldly and spiritual attainments.

[432] These are of two types: *bsod-nams-rdzogs* (accumulation of merit) and *ye-shes-rdzogs* (accumulation of wisdom).

[433] This is a form of the Bon wisdom goddess Shes-rab byams-ma, as well as a metaphor for realizing the true nature of mind/reality.

rdzu 'phrul bskos pa'i gnas chen brgya nyer bzhi / de yi nang tshan (= mtshan) gnam mtsho phyugs (= phyug) mo zhes / rnam mkhyen rgyal ba'i byin gyis rlabs pa'i mtsho / gnas mchog khyad par can la gsol ba 'debs / dbyings kyi yum chen sa trig Er sangs gyis (= kyis) / yon tan sprul pa gnam phyi gung rgyal gyi / sprul pa'i mtshan du mtsho sman rgyal mo zhes / rig 'dzin mchog gyur stong rgyung mthu chen gyi / gsang ba'i yum chen ye shes mkha' 'gro ma /

(ii) shes rab dbyings phyug ma la gsol ba 'debs / ma chags srin mo'i do la sku bzhugs pa'i / dbus phyogs gnyen (= gnyan) chen gzigs sngar mkha' 'gro ma / sku mdog dkar mo dung sbrul thod lding can / rigs lnga'i dbu rgyan rin chen rus brgyan (= rgyan) mdzes / dar zab na bza' me tog 'phreng ba gsol / gri khug thod khrag kha ṭam gar stabs 'gying / brtse gdung chen mos mchog thun dngos grub stsol / rdzu 'phrul mkha' 'gro ma la gsol ba 'debs / phyogs bzhi'i mkha' 'gro ser ljang dmar sngo bzhi / rus brgyan thod 'phreng gri khug thod khrag bsnams / las bzhi'i dbang sgyur sangs rgyas bstan pa skyongs / sprul pa'i mkha' 'gro'i tshogs la gsol ba 'debs / lha lcam chen mo mkhan dkar ri la ni / g.yung drung kun grags brten ma yongs kyi gtso /

(iii) mtsho sman brgya rtsa klu sman 'bum dang bcas / las sgrubs (= sgrub) mkha' 'gro'i tshogs la gsol ba 'debs / khyed rnams mchod bstod gsol ba btabs pa'i mthus / spyi ru g.yung drung bstan pa dar zhing rgyas / sgos su bdag cag bsam don yid bzhin 'grubs / nad gdon zhi zhing tshe bsod dpal grags rgyas / dbang chen dngos thob dgra bgegs drag tu zlog / 'gro drug sgrib sbyang tshogs rdzogs thar lam phyed / shes rab phar phyin dbyings su sangs rgyas shog / bcas (ces) gnam mtsho'i gsol 'debs rdzogs so / bkra shis dpal 'bar 'dzam gling rgyan gyur shog sarba manga lam /

In the ritual cycle for the Bon tutelary deity of the body dBal-gsas rngam-pa, gNam-mtsho features as a deity called Yum (Mother). She is a mind manifestation of the great Bon protectress Srid-pa'i rgyal-mo (Queen of Existence), who rules over all lesser protectors and the assemblies of worldly deities. Like gNam-phyi gung-rgyal, Srid-pa'i rgyal-mo is considered a mind manifestation of Sa-trig Er-sangs, the Bon creatrix. She has many forms each with their own circle of deities. As Yum, gNam-mtsho is elevated in status to that of a high protectress (*bon-skyong*), transcending her worldly role as the goddess

of a lake. She is the ruler of four powerful male protectors, her spiritual sons, each with its own mountain residence: 1) east—Lha-rgod snying-phrom (bSam-gtan gangs-bzang); 2) south—Klu-bdud thang-lha (gNyan-chen thang-lha); 3) north—Mi-bdud 'byams-pa khrag-mgo (Nam-ra); and 4) west—bTsan-rgod hur-pa gsod-rkyen (Khong-khyim zhal-dkar). Each of these deities, in their sundry guises, has an apotropaic function exercised through the control of the various orders of elemental spirits, just as they do in the oral tradition of the spirit-mediums. In the Yum tradition, gNam-mtsho takes precedence over the male pantheon, as attested by certain spirit-mediums and other aspects of oral tradition. As Yum is thought to be a pre-Imperial goddess, ancient gynarchic cultural elements may possibly be reflected in the gender power equation presented in her textual tradition.

The most detailed descriptions of Yum and her coterie of male protectors is found in a ritual text entitled *Combined Performances of the Five, Mother, Sons, Masters of Treasures.*[434] It is designed for the exorcistic function of destroying the enemies of Bon. The text begins with the signaling of Yum and her sons who are urged to adhere to their oath (para i).[435] As is customary in literature for the *yul-lha*, the *ru-dar* (ensign or regimental banner) is used as a sign of martial victory (para i). Yum's native home is poetically depicted as a complete realm with both a snow mountain and a turquoise lake (para ii). Like other native deities, she is described as possessing a dualistic personality, empowering her to be both mistress of disease and the guardian of the life-force (para iii). It will be recalled that the spirit-mediums that work with gNam-mtsho and her circle attribute disease to them as well as being the agents of sound health.

The first of Yum's sons to be detailed is Lha-rgod snying-phrom, who like the spirit-mediums, is portrayed playing the drum and *gshang*

[434] *gTer bdag yum sras lnga yi dril bsgrub* (nos. 617–630) is found in *the dBal gsas rngam pa'i sngags sgrub 'phrin las* section (nos. 543–676) of a volume entitled *Phyi nang gsang gsum gyi nyer mkho 'dod 'jo 'khri shing.* The colophon reads: "Treasure hid at the secret rock on the neck (flanks) of the south mountain." (*lho ri'i mgul nas* (= *na*) *gsang ba'i brag la gter du sbas /*). This line is followed by a brief account of how Bon declined in the period of King Khri-srong lde'u-btsan (755–797) necessitating the hiding of texts. The concluding line, states, "The treasures of Khod-spungs [dran-pa nam-mkha'] were hidden all over." (*Khod spungs gter kun la khyad par sbas /*). This last line seems to indicate that the text was authored by Dran-pa nam-mkha' (Eighth century).

[435] This translation does not treat the first portion of the text (nos. 617 to 620, ln. 5). It contains mantras and preparatory instructions for conducting the ritual.

(para iv). In one diurnal emanation, he appears as a Bon-po (para iv). In this guise, he is attired in a tiger-skin robe and wears the horns of the *khyung* bird on his head, in the manner of the ancient kings of Zhang-zhung.[436] Lha-rgod snying-phrom has the function of separating the enemy from his *lha*. This is reflective of the spirit-mediums' philosophy of infelicity, which holds that a major cause of disease and misfortune is the loss or degradation of one's personal protective deities (such as the *pho-lha, phugs-lha* and *tshe-lha*). In his morning emanation, Klu-bdud thang-lha has the appearance of a typical *lha-ri*, a white deity with a white robe and helmet (para v). The deities Mi-bdud 'byams-pa khrag-mgo and his assistant bTsan-rgod hur-pa are described in characteristic fashion as bloodthirsty, pitiless foes of the enemies of Bon (paras vi, vii). Mi-bdud is recorded as having the power to bring the enemy's soul and life under his control (*gran gyi bla tshe dbang du sdud*). Likewise, his alter-ego Nam-ra and the other mountain gods of the spirit-mediums have this same ability to influence the lives and souls of people. *Combined Performances of the Five, Mother, Sons, Masters of Treasures* concludes with the flesh and blood offerings typically given to the indigenous pantheon, and a final reiteration of the life-fostering, enemy-destroying capability of Yum and her sons (para viii):

> (i) *bSwo*! Assembly of oath-holding protectors do not be distracted. In the first epoch of ancient times you were bound to an oath, as you promised in front of dBal-gsas rngam-pa. Tonight, we the *gshen* practitioners call you. Come here now cutting the life-force of the enemy. We are the sons of the lineage of gShen-rab.[437] You have an ancient oath. As you have your oath be mindful of us. As you have your vow be our ally. We depend on the Swastika Bon protectors so you with your oath have no choice but to be obedient. The oath-breaker enemies

[436] A list of the 18 kings of Zhang-zhung, possessors of bird-horn headdresses made of different types of precious materials, is found in the *Ti se'i dkar chag* of dKar-ru grub-dbang bstan 'dzin, nos. 599, ln. 2 to 601, ln. 4. Within an archaeological context, I discuss this passage in a paper prepared for the Tenth conference of the International Association of Tibetan Studies, Oxford. In the Tun-huang manuscript *Pelliot 1136* (Imaeda *et al.*, p. 47), lns. 0026–0028, there is a tale about a *do-ma* (equid used in funerary rituals to guide the deceased to the afterlife), in the form of a colt (*rte'u*) named Ser-ngang 'ger, on whose head bird horns and *khyung* horns were erected (*dbul* (= *dbu la*) *bya ru khyung ru ni btsugs*). Bon funerary texts of the *bka' brten* collection explicitly state that such horns were used to show that the *do-ma* had the power of flight.

[437] gShen-rab can refer to either Lord gShen-rab or the lineage of *gshen* practitioners.

do not permit us to practice and meditate on the *bon-nyid-don* (essential nature of reality). Mother and sons come with your oath. Slay the enemies and hold aloft the regimental banner.

(ii) *bSwo*! In the country of Khri 'dus stong 'tshogs (Ten Thousand Gathering One Thousand Assembling) there is a white snow mountain in the sky *zangs se zangs*.[438] There is a blue turquoise lake *kyi li li*.[439] The birds are calling out with divers melodious songs. There are wild ungulates and carnivores *khra la la*.[440] There is the sound of the multitude *di ri ri*.[441] *bSwo*! There is a whistling sound *lhangs se lhang*.[442] The country that exists as such is dBal-yul khri 'dus 'od-po che (Great Effulgent Assembling of Ten Thousand Very Wrathful Country). The one who stays at this holy place is the sister of the *bdud*, conqueror of the haughty ones, the only mother. She is the daughter who manifested from the mind of bDe 'gro-yum (Mother of Living Beings and Their Happiness).

(iii) Ma-bdud srid-pa'i rgyal-mo (Mother bDud Queen of Existence) you have a dark green body color and a *thor-gtsug*[443] of turquoise. Your peacock feather *thul-pa*[444] costume is beautifully ornamented with black tassels. In your right hand is the blue and red lasso of disease that binds the oath-breaker enemies.[445] In your left hand is the *bum-pa* of life that preserves the life and life-force of the *gshen*. You rove around the innumerable worlds riding the black female bird of the *bdud* (chough). You delegate the work of the worldly female deities. We are affectionately calling, come in an instant. The time has come to slaughter the oath-breaker enemies. Conquer quickly and slaughter the obstacles, enemies and obstructers.

(iv) *bSwo*! Ma-bdud srid-pa'i rgyal-mo has four attendants, her obedient workers. In front of Yum is the guide, the haughty one Lha-rgod snying-phrom. You have bright white body color like a snow mountain. On your body is a white *la'u*[446] with beautiful turquoise beads on its collar. On your head you wear a waving tiger-skin hat. In your hands are the drum and *gshang*, musical instruments that you play like

[438] *Zangs se zangs* conveys a towering, pointed mountain.
[439] *Kyi li li* portrays the movement of circular ripples.
[440] *Khra la la* depicts the dynamic movement and mixed colors of the animals.
[441] *Di ri ri* conveys the sound of thunder, drums and other sounds with a loud report.
[442] *Lhangs se lhang* indicates the pulsating effect of sound that travels long distance.
[443] A crown-like round ornament worn on top of the head.
[444] A kind of long outer robe related to that still used by Tibetan monks.
[445] *Gyi-gran* (also, *gran*). A word of Zhang-zhung etymology that corresponds with *dam-nyams* (oath-breaker) or *dgra-bo* (enemy).
[446] A robe or mantle, the exact style of which is no longer known.

thunder. You render the blighters of Bon unconscious. In the morning you manifest the appearance of a *lha*. You ride a white horse *spang-len*[447] mount. You signal the army of *lha* with the white silk ensign in your hands. Separate the enemy from his *lha*. In the midday you assume the appearance of a Bon-po. On your body you wear a beautiful tiger-skin *slag*[448] and on your head bird horns. Support the *bon* and *gshen*.[449] At dusk you assume the appearance of a *bdud*. You are the butcher who cuts the life-force of the oath-breaker enemies. Support the *bon* and *gshen* and slay the *gyi-gran* (oath-breaker enemies).

(v) *bSwo*! The guide on the right of Yum is Klu-bdud thang-lha. You have a conch white body color and wear a white silk *ral-ga* (type of outer robe). On your head you wear a white conch helmet. You assemble the army of *klu* and *gnyan* with the *dar-mdung* in your right hand. With your left hand you strike the hearts of the oath-breaker enemies with a savage thunderbolt of celestial iron.[450] You ride a light orange conch horse mount. In the morning you assume the appearance of a *lha*. You signal an army of *lha* and *dri-za*.[451] In the afternoon you assume the appearance of a *klu* king. You control the one hundred thousand orders of *klu*. At dusk you assume the appearance of a *gnyan*. You depute the ferocious *klu-bdud* attendants. The *dgra-bo* (enemies) of the *gshen* are slain by you.

(vi) *bSwo*! The guide on the left of Yum is Mi-bdud 'byams-pa khrag-mgo. You have a fearful savage manner, the black complexion of darkness and a black silk *cod-pan*.[452] On your body is the full skin of a wild yak trimmed with ferocious black bear [skin]. With the ax of the *bdud* in your right hand you split the heads of the enemies. You signal the army of *bdud* with the black ensign in your left hand. You ride a fierce lion mount. At dusk you assume the appearance of a *bdud*. You are the generic *bdud* who cuts the oath-breaker enemies. At midnight you assume the appearance of a butcher. You rip out the hearts of the oath-breaker enemies and consume them. At dawn you assume the appearance of a *btsan*. You are the generic *bdud* who cuts the oath-breaker enemies. At midnight you assume the appearance of a butcher. You bring the lives and souls of the oath-breaker enemies under your power. An army of one hundred thousand *bdud* encircles you. You

[447] A word probably describing the horse but its meaning is not clear.
[448] A robe made of various types of animal skins that is the equivalent of the sheep skin *phyu-pa* or *slog-pa* worn by the *'brog-pa*.
[449] *Bon* and *gshen* here refers to types of Bon practitioners.
[450] *gNam-lcags*. In Bon iconography the sign of this substance is a nine-pointed star.
[451] Literally, 'smell-eaters', the Indian Gandharvas, an innocuous type of celestial musician.
[452] A kind of turban. Possibly a word of Zhang-zhung origin?

depute the attendant bTsan-rgod hur-pa. You send for work Klu-bdud gzong-mchu (Klu-bdud Chisel Beak). Cut the life-force of the oath-breaker enemies and consume their flesh and blood.

(vii) *bSwo*! Following behind Yum is bTsan-rgod hur-pa gsod-rkyen.[453] You have a blazing bright jewel-colored body. You wear a magnificent and regal red-striped *thang-ber*.[454] You tie an attractive blazing red orange *thod* (turban). On your waist are hung a tiger-skin [quiver], sword and [other] implements of the male. In your right hand you hold aloft a regimental banner (*dbal-dar ru-mtshon*) to send the many subsidiary *btsan* to work. By the red lasso of the *btsan* in your left hand you seize and strangle the oath-breaker enemies. You ride a dark gray horse with black under-parts. You circle the world and subdue the enemies. In the morning you assume the appearance of the *lha*. You call to work one hundred thousand subsidiary *btsan*. In the afternoon you assume the appearance of a king. You send to work the one hundred thousand subsidiary *btsan* and *'gying-bdud*. At dusk you assume the appearance of a *btsan*. You depute the red *btsan* attendants of violent death. At twilight you assume the appearance of a *bdud*. You make the *se-long*[455] to the souls and lives of the oath-breaker enemies. At midnight you assume the appearance of a butcher who goes to work and obeys the commands of Yum. At dawn you retract your manifestations and [return] to your actual self. Preserve the life and life-force of all the *gyer-spungs* (Bon teachers). The secret name conferred on you is bTsan-rgod hur-pa gsod-rkyen. The time has come to slaughter the oath-breaker enemies. Having spoken, thus recite the mantras of setting upon [the enemy].

(viii) *bSwo*! The mother is Ma-bdud srid-pa'i rgyal [mo] who regulates living beings and is the owner of disease. The powerful and wrathful Lha-rgod snying-phrom, the wrathful and powerful Klu-bdud thang-lha, Mi-bdud 'byams-pa khrag-mgo with the face of the *lda*, bTsan-rgod gsod-rkyen-po, circle of Yum and sons, and all of their retinues, display many kinds of body manifestations. Do not forget that you promised and took an oath before dBal-gsas rngam-pa. Preserve the life and life-force of the *gshen* and *bon*, and defeat their oath-breaker enemies. Please accept your preferences, gifts for the senses, the first portion of things, [other] offerings, flesh, blood and *gtor-ma*. Protectors of the Swastika Bon doctrine carry out the activities entrusted to you.

[453] *gSod-rkyen* means: 'kills swiftly and decisively'.
[454] *Thang* might denote the style of dress used by the T'ang dynasty (618–907) emperors of China.
[455] A wrathful hand gesture. See Part Three, section i, p. 216 (fn. 134).

Transliteration of the gTer bdag yum sras lnga yi dril bsgrub *text*

(i) bswo ma g.yel dam can srung ma'i tshogs / sngon gyi bskal pa dang po la / dbal gsas rngam pa'i spyan snga ru / ci ltar khas blang tha tshig can / do mod sgrub gshen bdag 'bod kyi / dgra srog gcod cing da tshur spyon / bdag ni gshen rab rgyud kyi bu / khyed ni sngon gyi tha tshig can / tha tshig bzhin du bdag la dgongs / dam bca' bzhin du sdong grogs mdzod / dam can khyod la bka' nyan mi bskyed du / mgon skyobs g.yung drung bon la re / bon nyid don la bsgrub cing bsgom pa la dam nyams dgra bos ma ster ba / dam can yum sras dam la spyon / gran khams sgrol la ru dar phyor

(ii) bswo yul ni khri 'dus stong 'tshogs na / gangs dkar gnam du zangs se zangs / g.yu mtsho sngon mo kyi li li / 'dab chags skad snyan sna tshogs sgrogs / ri dwag gcan gzan khra la la / sgra skad cho dgu di ri ri / bswo sgra shug sgra lhangs se lhang / de 'dra'i yul cig srid pa ni / dbal yul khri 'dus 'od po che / gnas yul de na bzhugs pa ni / ma cig dregs 'dul bdud ki lcam / bde 'gro yum gyi thugs las sprul pa'i sras /

(iii) ma bdud srid pa'i rgyal mo ni / sku mdog ljang nag g.yu yi thor tsug (= gtsug) can / na bza' rma bya'i thul pa la / dar nag 'phur shams mdzes par brgyan / phyag g.yas nad zhags sngon dmar gyi gran bcings / phyag g.yon tshe bum gshen gyi tshe srog skyob / bdud bya rog mo zhon nas stong gsum nyul / 'jig rten sman btsun las la bskos / 'bod cing gdung nas skad cig yud spyon / gyi gran bsgral ba'i dus la bab / bar chad dgra bgegs dbang du sdud la myur du sgrol /

(iv) bswo ma bdud srid pa'i rgyal mo yi / las mdzad bka' nyan pho nya bzhi / yum gyi sngon nas sna 'dren pa / dregs pa lha rgod snying phrom ni / sku mdog dkar gsal gangs ri 'dra / sku la dar dkar la'u la / g.yu 'od mdzes pa'i gong 'phreng can / dbu la stag zhu ldem pa gsol / phyag mtshan rnga gshang 'brug ltar sgrogs / bon la gnod pa brgyal du 'jud / snga dro lha'i chas su sprul / dkar po spang len chibs su bcibs / phyag na dar dkar ru mtshon lha dmag bskul / gran gyi lha dang phrol la shog / nyin gung bon po'i chas su zhugs / stag slag bya ru sku dang dbu la mdzes / bon dang gshen gyi kha yang 'dzin / dgong kha bdud kyi chas su zhugs / gran khams srog gcod shan par byed / bon dang gshen gyi kha 'dzin mdzod la gyi gran sgrol /

(v) bswo yum gyi g.yas nas ru 'dren pa / klu bdud thang lha gnyan sras ni / sku ni dung mdog dar dkar ral ga gsol / dbu la dung gi rmog zhu gsol / phyag yas dar mdung klu gnyan dmag tshogs bsdud / phyag g.yon gnam lcags thog rgod gyi gran snying la brdeg / chibs su dang rta ngang dkar bcibs / snga dro lha yi chas su zhugs / lha dang dri za'i dmag tshogs bskul / nyin gung klu rgyal chas su zhugs / klu rigs 'bum gyi kha lo bsgyur / dgung kha gnyan gyi chas su zhugs / klu bdud gdug pa pho nyar 'gyed / gshen gyi dgra bo khyed kyis sgrol /

(vi) bswo yum gyi g.yon nas ru 'dren pa / mi bdud 'byams pa khrag mgo ni / 'jig tshul rngam pa mun pa'i mdog nag po dar nag cod pan can / sku la 'brong gi g.yang gzhi la / dom nag gdug pa'i mtha' skor can / phyag g.yas bdud stas dgra mgo gshog / phyag g.yon dar nag ru mtshon bdud dmag bskul / chibs su seng ge kha rngam bcibs / srod la mi bdud chas su zhugs / gran khams spyi bdud gcod par byed / nam gung shan pa'i chas su zhugs / gran snying phyung la zhal du gsol / tho rang btsan gyi chas su zhugs / gran khams spyi bdud gcod par byed / nam gung shan pa'i chas su zhugs / gran gyi bla tshe dbang du sdud / 'khor du bdud dmag 'bum gyis bskor / btsan bdud hur pa pho nyar 'gyed / klu bdud gzong mchu las la gtong / gran srog gcod la sha khrag gsol /

(vii) bswo yum gyi slad kyi rjes 'geb pa / btsan rgod hur pa gsod rkyen ni / sku mdog rin chen 'od du 'bar / 'gying brjed (= brjid) thang ber dmar khra gsol / le brgan 'bar ba'i 'dzum thog bcings / stag ral skyes chas sked la btags / phyag g.yas dbal dar ru mtshon phyar / btsan phran mang po las la 'gyed / g.yon pas btsan zhags dmar po yis / gyi gran mgul nas bzung zhing sdoms / chibs su gro smug 'gab nag bcibs / 'dzam gling bskor zhing gran khams 'dul / snga dro lha yi chas su 'jug / btsan phran 'bum yang las la bskul / nyin gung rgyal po'i chas su 'jug / btsan phran 'bum dang 'gying bdud las la 'gyed / dgong kha btsan gyi chas su 'jug / dri (= gri) btsan dmar po pho nyar 'gyed / srod la bdud kyi chas su 'jug / gran gyi bla tshe se long byed / nam gung shan pa'i chas su 'jug / yum gyi bka' nyan las la 'gro / tho rang sprul pa rang sar bsdus / gyer spungs kun gyi tshe srog skyobs / khyed la gsang ba'i mtshan gsol ba / btsan rgod hur pa gsod rkyen yin / gran khams bsgral ba'i dus la bab / ces rbad sngags bzlas (= bzla'o) so /

(viii) bswo yum ni ma bdud srid pa'i rgyal / skye 'gro skos 'debs

nad kyi bdag / lha rgod snying phrom rtsal drag po / klu bdud thang lha drag rtsal can / mi bdud 'byams pa lda byad can / btsan rgod hur pa gsod rkyen po / yum sras 'khor dang bcas pa rnams / sku yis sprul pa cir yang ston / dbal gsas rngam pa'i spyan snga ru / khas blang dam bcas ma bsnyel bar / bon dang gshen gyis (= gyi) gran khams thul la tshe srog skyobs / mthun rdzas spyan gzigs phud mchod dang / sha khrag gtor ma 'di bzhes la / g.yung drung bon gyi bstan pa srungs / bcol ba'i phrin las grub par mdzod /

ix) *A Recapitulation of the Role of Mountain Deities*

Let us begin this section with an untitled *gsol-kha* text attributed to four renowned Eighth century practitioners, which is found in the Bon commentaries.[456] Like many other *gsol-kha*, this work maintains lines of seven syllables throughout. This text is very important because it clearly summarizes the kinds of activities that violate the sanctity of the environment-bound pantheon. An examination of the activities that anger these deities provides a traditional résumé of the etiology of disease as endorsed by the spirit-mediums. The text is also significant because it furnishes a literary basis for the cosmogonic qualities of female lakes, which is mostly the provenance of the Upper Tibetan oral tradition.[457]

After the preliminary refuge-taking and visualizations, the text presents a ritual proclamation in the form of an origin myth (*smrang*) (paras i, ii). The media from which the indigenous deities arise are wind, light and a series of lakes. In one sequence, the cosmogonic elements are a female lake and the wind, which give birth to a generative egg. This recalls the cosmological procreative function of the

[456] New Collection of Bon *bka' brten*, vol. 87, nos. 897–902. The colophon reads: "Offer these words in this way to the *yul-sa* for the reconciliation of their enmity. This pacifier of the *yul-sa* was written by the mKhas-pa mi-bzhi*. When the Bon doctrine declined Li-shu stag-ring hid it at the peak of rMa-rgyal pom-ri. Subsequently, it was discovered from a rock sealed with signs by the treasure-finder of the Kyu-ra [clan]." (*ces yul sa mchod cing mkhon* (= *'khon*) *'gras sdum pa'i / yul sa zhi ba 'di ni / mkhas pa mi bzhi'i mdzad nas / li shu stag ring gis bon chos dar nub gyi dus su / rma rgyal pom ri'i rtse la sbas swo / phyis kyu ra gter ston gyis / bka' rtag* (= *rtags*) *can gyi brag nas bston* (= *bton*) *pa'o /*).

* Zhang-zhung sTong-rgyung mthu-chen, Se-bon Sha-ri dbu/U-chen, lDe-bon Gyis-tsha rma-chung, and Me-nyag lCe-tsha mkhar-bu.

[457] Cosmogonic lake myths of the oral tradition are found in Bellezza 1997, pp. 95–137; 2001, pp. 78, 79.

union of the upper male realm with the female underworld, a mytheme of great pervasiveness and persistence throughout Inner Asia,[458] as well as having a place in world mythology. In the Buddhist text *Rlang kyi po ti bse ru rgyas*, written by Ta'i si-tu (1302–1371), this mythic motif is expressed as follows (Norbu 1996: 18, 579): "From the essence of the five elements appeared a large egg. The shell of the egg became a divine white rock formation. The liquid inside the egg was a swirling conch lake. The middle of the egg became the six realms of sentient beings."

The cosmogonic egg is a mythic theme with wide distribution in the Tibetan cultural world, and it is assigned by Bon tradition to early times. In a commentary on the famous Bon cosmological work entitled *Srid pa'i mdzod phugs*, which is attributed to Dran-pa nam-mkha' (Eighth century), the generative power of the cosmic egg is described.[459] This account notes that from the essence of the five elements two eggs were formed. The egg from the virtuous side of existence was octagonal and as large as a yak. This white egg was broken by a wheel of light, and from it appeared Srid-pa sangs-po 'bum-khri, a conch [white] man with turquoise hair, the king of *yod-khams* (existence). Likewise, in an ancient (?) myth recorded in the *Ti se'i dkar chag* of dKar-ru Grub-dbang (born 1801) generative eggs are responsible for the birth of the four sacred Bon lakes in south-western Tibet, (nos. 507–510). This account states, "In the beginning there was vacuous emptiness. From the causal principle of self-manifesting existence four radiant eggs descended from the emptiness of space."[460] They are listed as:

[458] The Na-khi, a people who have retained significant ancient Bon customs and traditions, have a body of similar myths. In one of their manuscripts, it states that the father of the Na-khi race, Mùaṇ-llü ddu-ndzï, came forth from a silver white mountain and his wife Ts'u-chwua gyi-muṇ was born from a turquoise blue lake (Rock 1952: 134). Yü-p'ü chĕr-sso ä-dzĭ, the grandmother of thirteen Na-khi warrior spirits (similar to the Tibetan *thugs-dkar* and *wer-ma*), was born from a turquoise blue lake, while their grandfather Yü-p'ü chĕr-sso ä-p'u, was born from a white as conch mountain (Rock 1972: 105, 106; 1952: 134). In a Na-khi funerary manuscript it relates that Shi-lo's (gShen-rab) father was the heaven and his mother the earth (Rock 1972: 460). Khü-zä, the first human being, came into being from a golden yellow lake that appeared from a dew drop, which fell from an egg laid by heaven and earth (Rock 1963a: 191). Some of the *llü-muṇ* (*klu*) were also born from eggs (Rock 1972: 124–170).

[459] See *Srid pa'i mdzod phugs kyi rtsa 'grel*, nos. 52–54. The commentary section of this work is entitled *bDen pa bon gyi mdzod sgo sgra 'grel 'phrul gyi lde mig*, nos. 1–231. A detailed description of this cosmogonic sequence is found in Karmay 1998, pp. 127, 128.

[460] *Dang po ci yang med pa'i stong pa la srid pa rang 'byung gyi rgyu las stong pa nam mkha'i klong na rin po che 'od kyi sgong nga bzhi ru babs /*. In the indigenous cosmogony recorded in the *mKhas pa lde'u* (p. 227), this state of pre-existence is worded: "When the first epoch began existence did not exist." (*dang-po bskal pa bas bskal srid pas ma srid tsam na /*).

1) Conch egg—Gur-rgyal lha-mo mtsho (Zom-shangs lcags-mtsho, Seng-stod township, dGe-rgyas county).
2) Turquoise egg—Ma-pang g.yu-mo-mtsho (Bar-kha and Hor townships, Pu-rang county).
3) Golden egg—La-nag bsil-mo mtsho (La-lnga mtsho/La-ngags mtsho/La-sngar mtsho, Bar-kha township).
4) Silver egg—Gung-chu dngul-mtsho (Gung-rgyud mtsho, Hor township).

In a *g.yang 'gugs* (fortune-summoning) text entitled *Mu ye pra phud phya'i mthur thug* it records eight deities of the *g.yang* born from eggs made of precious substances.[461] These deities summon the good fortune capability of the various kinds of wealth for the ritualists and their benefactors. The *g.yang* thus called functions to insure numerous and healthy livestock, an abundant source of grain and plenty of jewels. The text states: "The father is the towering rock of existence and the mother is the miraculous lake of existence. From the manifestation of the mind of these two appeared the eight eggs of existence." The eggs and the deities that appeared from them are described as follows:

1) Conch white egg: a conch white holy man (*mi-pho*) named rTa-lha 'phen-po (Wealthy Horse Lha). He holds a golden bridle and turquoise halter and summons all the *g.yang* of horses.
2) Sparkling crystal egg: a sparkling crystal holy man named g.Yag-lha 'gying-ba (Magnificent Yak Lha). He holds a *gdang-thag* (yak hitching line) and summons all the *g.yang* of cattle.
3) Blue turquoise egg: a turquoise woman named 'Bri-lha sham-po. She holds a golden *zo-bo* (milk-pail) and summons all the *g.yang* of the female yaks.
4) Purplish brown agate egg: an agate holy man radiating golden light named Lug-lha mkhar-bu (Sheep Lha Small Castle). He holds a crystal *star-thag* (sheep hitching line) and summons all the *g.yang* of the sheep.

[461] See folios 18a, ln. 1 to 19b, ln. 3. A photographic reproduction of this rare manuscript of 36 folios is found in Karmay and Nagano 2002.

5) Blue iron egg: a blue iron holy man named Ba-lha sgrum-mo. He holds a milk-pail of conch and summons all the *g.yang* of cows.
6) Dark blue egg: a dark blue holy man named Ra-lha tshed-mo (Female Goat Goat Lha). He holds a milk-pail of turquoise and summons all the *g.yang* of goats.
7) Red copper egg: rainbow-colored holy man named Khams-gsum bcud-bsdud (Collector of the Essence of the Three Worlds). He holds a *bang-nga* (grain canister) with [a pattern] of nine eyes, and summons all the *g.yang* of grain.
8) Jewel egg: a jeweled holy man named g.Yang-bdag dzam-lha. He holds the jewel treasury, and collects the essence and hue of the three elements of the *srid-gsum* (three spheres of existence).

Our untitled *gsol-kha* text explicitly states that the prime mountain divinities are manifested from a turquoise lake. Bon texts for the goddess Yum-sras of gNam-mtsho (ascribed to the same period as this work) also assign the role of sons to the male mountain gods. As noted, some of the spirit-mediums likewise affirm that the female lake deities are foremost. Paleocultural matriarchal social structures may possibly be implicit in this gender relationship (cf. Bellezza 1997: 115). In the same *Srid pa'i mdzod phugs* reference noted above, the progenetrix of all living beings originated from an ocean (*rgya-mtsho*). It explains that from the five elements appeared dew and raindrops, which formed the ocean. The ocean was churned by a wind and a bubble as large as a tent was formed. From it appeared a resplendent blue egg that opened on its own. From this appeared a turquoise blue woman, Chu-lcam rgyal-mo, the queen of existence.

In the theogonic sequence of the *gsol-kha* text mention is made of an archaic grouping of deities known as Lha-gar-rten gsum who spring up from light (para i). This group includes the *lha* of the three cosmological realms, the *gar* protectors from enemies, and the *rten*, the nine personal and household gods.[462]

[462] The Lha-gar-rten gsum/Lha-dkar-rten gsum has some correspondence with the gNam-lha dkar-gsum, a group that resides high in the firmament, which are found in a theogonic sequence that gave rise to Tibet's first king, gNya' khri btsan-po. See *mKhas pa lde'u*, p. 243. Their description and offerings are found in a *mdos* ritual for them and the *lha-srin sde-brgyad* entitled *mKha' klong gsang mdos kyi lha gar brten* (= *rten*) *gsum bskang ba*, which is located in the volume known as *sPyi spungs mkha' klong gsang mdos* (New Collection of Bon *bka' brten*, vol. 19, nos. 361–383), nos. 363, ln. 5 to 368, ln. 3. Unfortunately, no author or finder is provided in the text. They are enumerated as follows:

'Ol-rje gnam gyi lha-dgu (Nine 'Ol Lords Lha of the Sky) described as 'the dynasty of the nine *lha* of existence'. They come from the castle of the *lha* called mKhar ze-ze rtse-thon (= mthon), located in the white meadow of the resplendent divine country.

Center—Ye-srid 'phrul-rgyal, who spins the disc of existence made from various types of precious substances.

East—Lha-chen rgyal-byin (= brgya-byin), who has blazing white color and turns a wheel of white crystal.

North—Tshangs-pa 'bum-khri, who is light green and holds a *chags-shing* (scepter) of delegation.

West—Yid-de rgyal-ba, who is light yellow and holds a miraculous lasso.

South—Yid-la sems-dpa', who is blue-green and holds a *lcags kyi ber-ka* (iron club).

Southeast—sKar-mda' yi (= mda'i) rgyal-po, who is light-green and holds a miraculous bow and arrow.

Northeast—Srid-rje 'brang-dkar, who is light green and holds a *thabs kyi gze-zhags* (barbed snare of skillful means)

Northwest—Phya-rje ring-dkar, who is light green and holds a *Ud 'bar* (blue poppy or blue lily) flower.

Southwest—sKos-rje drangs-dkar, who is purple and holds a *be-con* (baton) of delegation.

The Bar-na gnas-pa'i lha-dgu (nine *lha* of the intermediate zone) are: rJe'o yab-bla bdal-drug (see pp. 397, 398, Fn. 193), sKyobs-bya (= byed) phya-bla bram-phyin, Grogs-byed khri-de sum-po (see p. 398), sTong-byed rgya-bla 'brong-nam, holder of the lineage 'Od-de gung-rgyal (see pp. 397–400), sKos-pa yongs-su dag-pa, mDzod-srungs Arya dzam-pa (a wealth god), 'Phel-byed phyug-lha rma-g.yang, and Tshe 'dzin srog-lha nyams-chen. The Sa-la gnas-pa'i lha-dgu (nine *lha* of the earth realm) bear some resemblance to standard lists of the Srid-pa'i lha-dgu group of mountain gods, which have their precedent in a *glud* (ransom) ritual text of the Tun-huang manuscripts (see Thomas 1957, Part Three, pp. 73–76). The nine members are: Phu-gnyan gtsang-lha phu-dar*, mDo-gnyan mdo-la ri-bo, gDags-gnyan dral-btsun rma'o, Srib-gnyan lcam-btsun yul-rma, mTho-ba yar-lha sham-po, rMa-gnyan rkong-lha de-mo, Shing-gnyan nyang-lha pho-ma, mChe (= Che) ba thang-lha yar-bzhur (gNyan-chen thang-lha), and Khyab-pa yul-lha skos-rje.

* The Tunhuang manuscript *IOL 734*, ln. 295, mentions this deity: rTsang-la pu-dar.

The castle of the *gar* is Kha-lo dgu-brtsegs in the *gar* country of Yo/Ye-mo gser-sding. They are fierce opponents of enemies, and they savage the *sri* and rage against the *bgegs*. They protect the Father (metaphor for Bon religion).

The *rten* reside in the castle of 'Om-po rtse-mthon, in the pure country of the *rten*. They appear to be nine in number: *pho-lha, zhang-lha* (god of the maternal uncle), *ma-lha* (god of children), *thab-lha* (god of the hearth), *go-lha* (god of the kitchen), *khyim-lha* (god of household), *sgra-bla, srog-lha* (god of life-force), and *phyugs-lha* (god of cattle).

The *gsol-kha* text goes on to enumerate the types of offerings that the indigenous deities are accorded (para iii). These offerings include the lustration of the deities to purify them of any defilement that people may have caused. This is followed by a long litany of

human activities that contaminate and anger the deities, as well as protestations of reconciliation (para iv). The list of activities is ecological in nature and expresses the value of environmental balance and interspecies harmony. This list spells out native ecological conceptions enunciated in terms of proscriptions, which are typified by respect for the land and water, and the animal and spirit worlds that dwell in them. These ancient prohibitions, allied with the Buddhist ethic of non-violence, have prevailed in Tibet until recent times. The consequences that are believed to come from the violation of the ecological sanctions and the desire to avoid recriminations help to explain the continued demand for religious practitioners such as the *lha-pa*. These specialists work to restore the balance between society, the environment, and the deities immanent in them. The text ends with an affirmation of the pacification of ills befalling both deities and human beings (para v). Like the spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet, the text makes an explicit connection between disease and the disinclination of the indigenous pantheon towards humans:

> (i) Prostrations to the lama, *yi-dam* and *mkha' 'gro*. Now, for the pacification of the countryside, visualize yourself as the great and powerful *sku-bla*[463] riding a yellow golden elephant. Offer the first portion of things and say in this way: *Kyai'*! From primordial radiance and wind appeared the mighty *ma-sangs* and *yul-lha*. From light appeared the Lha-gar-rten gsum. From the union of the female lake and wind, a conch white egg appeared. It went inside the white lake of virtuous existence. It became a man's body with the wings of a *khyung*.[464] From his union with a divine white lake, the three-defender brothers appeared. They mated with the three white lake goddesses and four brothers appeared.[465]

> (ii) From the manifestation of the turquoise lake of much rain five brother and sister *yul-sa* appeared. The big brother was Gangs-dkar ti-tse.[466]

[463] *sKu-bla* here refers to Bon tutelary deities such as Ge-khod or Me-ri.
[464] For ornitho-therianthropic rock art in Upper Tibet see Bellezza 2000.
[465] These brothers are described as *char-mong skyol-po*, an expression I have not been able to identify.
[466] This is the great white Bon protective deity of Gangs rin-po-che. A description of this deity is found in the *Yul sa'i rgyal po ti pom thang gsung* (= *gsum*) of the *gSol kha sna tshogs* collection of invocation texts (New Collection of Bon *bka' brten*, vol. 87, nos. 1415, ln. 1 to 1418, ln. 3). The Ti-rtse (variant spelling) section of this text was discovered at Zang-zang lha-brag by dPon-gsas khyung-rgod-rtsal (born 1175). Selected verses include: "You are the sovereign master of Ti-rtse. Your body is like a snow-covered mountain. On your body you wear a crystal [white] *ber-chen*.

> The next brother was dPal-ri thang-lha.[467] The next brother was Yar-lha mthu-bo-che.[468] The next brother was Lha-gnyan seng ge mgo. The smallest was the divine lineage of Ge-khod.[469] The eighteen sister and brother protectors of humans, and the nine *sa-bdag* (owners of the earth) brothers of the *rma*[470] appeared. Then, in succession, the *sa-bdag* and mighty *yul-sa* appeared.

> (iii) Please come to this place of offering. We pacify your malice and savagery. *Kyai*! The assembly of *ma-sangs*, mighty *yul-lha, sa-bdag, klu, gnyan, gtod*,[471] the master of Tsang-tsang 'khor-ba-sa, Lha-mo brtan-ma,[472] and all the sovereigns of the earth, we give you these offerings of jewels, so bestow upon us the capability for the attainment of dominance over this place. We, the yogis, offer to and praise the *sa-bdag* and mighty *yul-lha*. We give offerings of the three white foods, the three sweets, various medicines, and the first portions of victuals. We give by offerings of various creatures [made from] different types of grains, clothes, milk, herbs, medicines, and fragrant incense. We pacify you with the smoke of many types of woody incense. We wash you with pure cleansing water. We offer the ingredients that please you.

> (iv) Listen to my speech, the *gshen-bon*'s,[473] assembly of *klu, gnyan, sa-bdag*, and *yul-sa*. The sponsors, benefactors and us, have not dug at your palace residence. In the event there was digging let us be peacefully reconciled. We reconcile you by offerings of jewels and incense. We did not upset your mighty stones. In the event that we did upset you let us be peacefully reconciled. We reconcile you by offerings of jewels and incense. We did not divert your mighty waters. In the event there was diversion let us be peacefully reconciled. We reconcile you

You have a turban of beautiful white silk bound on your head. You wear silver boots on your feet. In your right hand is a crystal white spear. With your left hand you hoist the great parasol of the sun and moon*. You ride a crystal [white] lion. On your right side are one thousand divine white yaks. On your left side are one thousand vermilion red tigers. You are the sovereign master of the world. You are the great powerful king of the *lha*. Protect the doctrine of g.Yung-drung Bon."
* May be symbolic of great power or, alternatively, refer to the actual sun and moon.
[467] gNyan-chen thang-lha.
[468] The famous mountain deity of southern Tibet Yar-lha sham-po.
[469] This is Ge-khod, the mountain deity, not the *yi-dam* of systematized Bon. The occurrence of Ge-khod in this context might allude to his early origins as a member of the environment-bound pantheon of Zhang-zhung.
[470] *rMa* is an indigenous clan and class of elemental spirits.
[471] *gTod* is a class of elemental spirits who act as the protector of locales.
[472] This goddess is related to the twelve *bstan-ma*, common native female proctectresses of Tibet. For a survey of this class of ancient goddesses see Nebesky-Wojkowitz, pp. 181–198.
[473] Bon-po priests of ancient times.

by offerings of jewels and incense. We did not cut your mighty trees. In the event that there was cutting let us be peacefully reconciled. We reconcile you by offerings of jewels and incense.
If we screamed on the mountaintops,
and irrigated with water channels and reservoirs,
and excavated at your mighty springs,
and accidentally lit big fires on mountains,
and killed your mighty deer and hunted your wild ungulates,
and destroyed your palaces and dwellings,
and spread flesh and blood at your mighty places,
and inadvertently sullied the hearth with dairy and meat products,[474]
and slept in the middle of your palaces,
and went naked at your mighty places,
and mindlessly made the sound *phaṭ*,[475]
and startled you with drum and conch,
and showed the light of the fire in the evening,[476]
and poured out [hot] liquids with vapor at your mighty places,
and lit a fire in the eye (heart) of a place, etc.
[If we] molested the mighty *yul-lha*, rendered them unconscious, upset them, startled them, made them ill, and injured them, whatever transpired; we offer, by the benediction of the gods of affirmation,[477] these offerings of various kinds of herbs and medicines.

(v) You are the mighty *yul-sa*, and if you have any ill will for both us and the sponsors we will now reconcile it. If you are angry may you be pacified. If you are quarrelsome, we will reconcile the contention. If you are malicious may you be pacified. We give you offerings of incense, and pacific offerings to the mighty *yul-sa*. May all your grudges be pacified. May all our infectious diseases and ailments be pacified. May your hatred and malice be pacified. May all harm be pacified, and consummate our and our circle's happiness. Propagate good luck and the [Bon] doctrine. May our merits increase.

Transliteration of the untitled gsol-kha text

(i) bla ma yi dam mkha' 'gro gsum la phyag 'tshal lo / da ni yul sa zhi bar bcos te / bdag sku bla mthu chen ser po gser glang la

[474] *dKar-thab* and *dmar-thab* could also refer to the contamination of springs with dairy and meat products respectively.
[475] *Phaṭ* is a word believed to have much mystic power. It is used in exorcistic rites by both the Bon-po and Buddhists for the subjugation of malevolent forces and spirits. It is also often the first word uttered in trance by the spirit-mediums.
[476] This mainly refers to torches that direct their light in certain places, which can disturb the spirit world as well as wild animals.
[477] This seems to refer to sTon-pa gshen-rab, the founder of Bon, or other great masters such as the mKhas-pa mi-bzhi, who bless the offerings and make them precious and worthy of presentation.

bcib par bsam la / phud kyis mchod ste 'di skad do / kyai' yangs (= ma sangs) yul lha gnyen (= gnyan) po rnams / dang po rlung dang zer las bsrid / 'od las lha dkar (= gar) rten gsum bsrid / rlung dang mtsho mo bshos pa la / dung sgong dkar po gcig tu bsrid / yod mtsho dkar mo'i nang du gshegs / mi lus khyung gi gshog can byung / de dang lha mtsho bshos pa la / yul sa mgon byed mched gsum bsrid / de mtsho dkar lha mo gsum dang rol / char mong skyol po mched bzhi bsrid /

(ii) char mang g.yu mtsho'i sprul pa la / yul sa lcam dral lnga ru bsrid / gcen po gang (= gangs) dkar ti tse dang / de 'og dpal ri thang lha dang / de 'og yar lha mthu bo che / de 'og lha gnyan seng ge mgo tha chung ge khod lha rgyud bsrid / mi mgon ming sring bco brgyad dang / rma'i sa bdag spun dgu bsrid / de nas rim par grol ba yi / sa bdag yul sa gnyen (= gnyan) po rnams /

(iii) mchod pa'i gnas 'dir gshegs su gsol / 'phrag dog gdug rtsub zhi bar mdzod / kyai ma sangs yul lha gnyen (= gnyan) po rnams / sa bdag klu gnyan gtod kyi tshogs / tsang tsang 'khor ba sa'i bdag / lha mo brtan ma las sogs ste (= te) / sa la mnga' mdzad thams cad la / rin chen mchod pa 'di 'bul gyis / sa la dbang pa'i (= ba'i) dngos grub stsol / sa bdag yul lha gnyen (= gnyan) po rnams / rnal 'byor bdag gis mchod cing bstod / dkar gsum dngar (= mngar) gsum sman sna dang / zhal zas phud kyi mchod pa 'bul / 'bru sna'i gzug (= gzugs) 'gros sna tshogs dang / dar zab 'o ma rtsi dang sman / dri zhim spos kyi mchod pas mchod / bsang (= bsangs) shing sna dgu'i dud pas bsang / gtsang shing dag pa chu'i (= chus) bskrus (= bkrus) / yid dang 'thad pa'i rdzas kyis mchod /

(iv) klu gnyan sa bdag yul sa'i tshogs / gshen bon bdag gi smrang la nyon / khyod kyi gnas mal pho brang du / bdag dang rgyu sbyor yon bdag gis / sa gnyan bskos (= brkos) pa ma mchis so / gal lte (= te) brkos na zhi bas bsdum / rin chen mchod pa bsang gis bsdum / rdo gnyan bzlog pa ma mchis so / gal lte (= te) bzlog na zhi bas sdum / rin chen mchod pa bsang gi (= gis) bsdum /chu gnyan bsgyur ba mchis so / gal lte (= te) bsgyur na zhi bas bsdum / rin chen mchod pa bsang gis bsdum / shing gnyan bcad pa ma mchis so / gal lte (= te) bcad na zhi bas bsdum / rin chen mchod pa bsang gis bsdum / ri'i rtse la gu btab dang / rdzing dang yul ba drang pa dang / chu mig gnyan po klog pa dang / ri la me chen shor ba dang / gnyan sha bsad dang ri dwag (= dwags) mngon

(= brngon) / pho brang gnas khang bshigs pa dang / gnyan sar sha dang khrag 'thor dang / dkar thab dmar thab shor ba dang / pho brang mig du (= tu) nyal ba dang / gnyan sar sgron (= sgren) bur dud (= bud) pa dang / yid ma dag phaṭ sgra dang / rnga dang dung gi bsngang pa dang / nub mo me 'od btang pa (= ba) dang / gnyan sar glang (= rlang) can phos pa dang / sa'i mig du me bus sog (= sogs) / yul sa gnyan la phog thug dang / brgyal dang brlag dang bsngang pa dang / na dang smas pa ci byung yang / rtsi sman sna tshogs mchod pa 'di / ston pa lha'i thugs rjes bsngo /

(v) yul sa'i nad rnams sangs 'gyur cig / yul sa gnyen (= gnyan) po khyed rnams dang / bdag dang rgyu sbyor yon bdag gnyis / 'gras pa yod na 'gras sdum mo / 'khros pa yod na zhi gyur cig / 'khrug pa yod na 'khrug sdum mo / gnod pa'i gdug sems zhi bar mdzod / yul sa gnyan po khyed rnams la / bsang dang zhi ba'i mchod pa 'bul / 'phrag dog thams cad zhi gyur cig / rim dang nad rnams zhi gyur cig / mkhon (= 'khon) dang gdug sems zhi bar mdzod / gnod pa thams cad zhi ba dang / bdag dang 'khor dang bcas pa rnams / bde skyid phun sum 'tshogs pa dang / bkra shis bstan pa dar bar mdzod / bsod nams dar la rgyas par shog /

One of the most popular shrines erected for the indigenous deities is the *gsas-mkhar* (deity castle). According to Bon tradition, this type of architecture originated in the pre-Imperial period.[478] The *gsas-mkhar* is a *rten* (support or receptacle) for the deities to reside in, and it can be of a temporary or permanent nature. *gSas-mkhar* vary greatly in form and complexity. They sometimes consist of five-tiered platforms on which all manner of offerings are placed. However, they can be as simple as a pile of rocks, like the *la-btsas* (cairns) erected on passes. In an offering text for the *gsas-mkhar* entitled *gSas mkhar la btsas bstod pa*, written by the 22nd abbot of sMan-ri monastery, all manner of indigenous classes of deities and the offerings they are to receive are mentioned.[479] This text serves as an excellent recapitulation of the deities and offerings that form the bulk of this study. Although it is only 200 years old, *gSas mkhar la btsas bstod pa* was written in consonance with the ancient tradition of indigenous deities, and contains no tantric or rDzogs-chen material.

gSas mkhar la btsas bstod pa informs us that the *gsas-mkhar* represents the castle of the deities (para i). In similar fashion, the spirit-mediums' bodies, along with their *me-long* and headdresses, function as receptacles for the same types of deities. Both these inanimate and animate *rten* act as foundations for the *'phrin-las-bzhi*, the four categories of activities that deities engage in (pacific, expanding, empowering and wrathful). The text describes the characteristics of the *'phrin-las-bzhi* and their arrangement in the four cardinal directions of the *gsas-mkhar* (para ii). The various classes of deities are invited to the different types of offering articles (para iii). They are depicted as circling these objects—not unlike the manner in which the radiant consciousness of the gods of the trance circles the ritual objects of the spirit-mediums.[480] The full array of characteristic offerings are made to the indigenous pantheon in order that they might reside in the *gsas-mkhar* and serve the desires of the ritualists (paras iv, v). The text includes a long list of aquatic, terrestrial and flying animals that are found in the retinues of the deities (para v). These animals also function as supports for the deities of the *srid-pa-gsum* (three realms of existence).

Pieces of cloth, with printed prayers and illustrations of *dgra-lha* and other deities, called *rlung-rta*, are another of the offerings stipulated in the text (para iii). These are commonly prescribed by spirit-mediums, *sngags-pa* and lamas to bring good luck to clients. In the ritual, a group of personal protectors called the *mgon-byed lha-lnga* (five defender gods), which include the *pho-lha* and *mo-lha*, circle the *rlung-rta*. My research demonstrates that these kinds of deities are also customarily worshiped by the *'brog-pa* with *rlung-rta* tied to their tents (*sbra-nag*). This custom is especially prevalent in western Tibet. Traditionally, a blue *klu-dar* for the *mo-lha* is tied to the exterior rear left side of the tent (the side of females), and a red *btsan-dar* for the *btsan yul-lha* and/or *phugs-lha* is tied to the exterior right side of the

[478] There may be some validity to this claim as I have discovered the ruins of cubic-shaped shrines at a number of archaic residential complexes in Upper Tibet. These appear to belong to the *gsas-mkhar* or *rten-mkhar* class of tabernacles.

[479] This text was written by sKu-mdun shes-rab dgongs-rgyal (also known as sKu-mdun bsod-nams blo-gros) (1784–1835). It is found in the *gSol kha* volume (New Collection of Bon *bka' brten*, vol. 87, nos. 1631–1636).

[480] This circling action is also found in the *gsol-kha* text *gNyan chen g.ya' spangs pa'i mchod sprin nam mkha' 'brug sgra* (folio 1b): "From the center [of the castle] the life-forces of the eight orders of spirits circle around the swastika holy man." (*dbus nas g.yung drung skyes bu la / sde brgyad srog nying sgo ro ro*).

tent (the side of males). The white *lha-dar* for the *lha-ri* and/or *pho-lha* is hung on the rear central mast of the tent. Sometimes *klu-dar* and *btsan-dar* are also attached to the interior rear walls of the tent in small portable shrines erected for the *mo-lha* and *phugs-lha*. Like the human couple residing inside the tent, the *mo-lha* and *btsan* of the *rlung-rta* have a dyadic relationship. This male-female interplay is frequently articulated in the conventional dichotomous geographic arrangement of mountain god and water goddess.[481] Among the best known dyads worshipped with *klu-dar* and *btsan-dar* are rTa-rgo and Dang-ra g.yu-mtsho of Nag-tshang, Da-dben rol-pa skya-bdun and Dung-khug mtsho of gZhung-pa ma-mtshan, the *btsan* and their *klu-mo* counterparts of the eight valleys of Ra-bang and Khul-pa, and bKa' lha-btsan and Rin-chen shor 'ur mtsho of Ru 'thor.[482]

Of special importance is the list of petitions made at the end of the *gSas mkhar la btsas bstod pa* to the deities once they have been enticed into residing in the *gsas-mkhar* (para vi). These form an excellent review of the operations of mountain and lake deities, and all other members of the indigenous or worldly pantheon. Their chief functions include:

1) Protection and guidance when traveling.
2) Protection against all types of human enemies and miscreants.
3) Destruction of demons.
4) Insurance of an ample supply of necessities.
5) Bestowal of wealth such as good food, livestock and other material possessions.
6) Fostering fertility.
7) Bestowal of social prestige.
8) Insurance of long life and good health.
9) Realization of all wishes and desires.

[481] The vertical orientation of the personal and community protective divinities is found all the way to the cultural fringes of western Tibet. For example, in the village of Te (in Nepal), three territorial deities are arranged in this fashion in a *gser-skyems*, which is used to prevent human and livestock illnesses and insure a good harvest. They include Pho-lha yon-tan dkar-po, who dwells at the top of the village and Mo-lha chu-btsan gnyan-po, who resides below the village on the bank of the river. See Ramble 1996, pp. 147, 148.

[482] Hazod (2000b: 212–214) notes that likewise, the mountain god Yar-lha shampo (Yar-lha) and the river goddess Yar-mo thang-nga (Yar-srin) are complemenary elements in the territorial cult of Yar-yul.

(i) *Kye!* This *gsas-mkhar* is for reliance on the wisdom gods. It is naturally formed from the five elements. It is faithfully established and constructed. This *rten* is offered as the support of the divine protectors. Outside it looks like the form of Ri-rgyal lhun-po. Inside it looks like the numen castle of the *lha*. The center is a jeweled palace. The outer, inner, secret, and ultra secret[483] divine protectors stay here at what resembles a heap of jewels.

(ii) From the conch east side of the *gsas-mkhar* the pacific divine protectors are [like] thick cloud cover. The expanding divine protectors of the turquoise south side of the *gsas-mkhar* twinkle like stars. The energetic divine protectors of the copper west side of the *gsas-mkhar* move like lightning. The wrathful divine protectors of the blue crystal north side of the *gsas-mkhar* spin like *thog* (molten metal thunderbolts).

(iii) The sun, moon and stars rise in space [above the *gsas-mkhar*]. [Likewise] the divine protectors of wisdom always circle it.[484] Thick clouds and rainbows cover the top [of the *gsas-mkhar* and likewise] the miraculous divine protectors always circle it. The sound of the wind element[485] [is heard at the *gsas-mkhar* and likewise] the divine protectors of activity always circle it. The divine protectors of the world always circle at the beautiful jeweled castle. The five *lha* of the five elements[486] always circle at the various kinds of herbs and trees [offerings], and the flagpole. The five-defender gods[487] always circle at the *rlung-rta* of five colors. The *yul-sa* and *gzhi-bdag* always circle at the bird

[483] *Phyi, nang, gsang-ba*, and *yang-gsang*. These four categories are the physical and ontological dimensions in which the deities operate.

[484] The use of the word *'khor* also connotes that the deities reside in the *gsas-mkhar* as well as circle it.

[485] The wind element is described in the text by the echoic *'u ru ru*, a whistling or strong blowing sound.

[486] According to the *Dri med gzi brjid* (vol. 2, p. 229, ln. 15 to p. 230, ln. 6, Bod-ljongs bod-yig dpe-rnying dpe-skrun khang, Lhasa: 2000), the goddesses and gods of the five elements are: 1) air—Rlung gi lha-mo kun-skyong sgron-ma and Dral-po rlung gi lha yangs-pa 'degs 'byed, givers of the diamond; 2) space—Nam-mkha'i lha-mo mdang ldan-ma and Dral-po nam-mkha'i lha gsal-ba go 'byed, givers of the rainbow tent; 3) fire—Me'i lha-mo tshang-stang 'od 'bar-ma and Dral-po me'i lha-gsal-ba smin 'byed, givers of the eight-petalled lotus; 4) water—Chu'i lha-mo ro-ldan bdud rtsi-ma and Dral-po chu'i lha kun-gso rlan 'byed, givers of the thousand-spoked wheel; and 5) earth—Sa yi lha-mo-gser long-spyod brtan-ma and Dral-po sa'i lha sra-brtan 'degs 'byed, givers of the blazing jewel. These deities revealed themselves and made offerings to gShen-rab at his coronation, held when he was one *gshen* year (100 human years). In a text for the purification of contamination (*mnol-bsang*) that beset the Bon god Ge-khod after the murder of his mother, the names of different goddesses of the four elements (minus space) include Zhang-zhung words: *li* (air), *tshang-stang* (fire), *ting* (water), and *slas* (earth) (Karmay 1998: 404, fn. 92).

[487] These are the *'go-ba'i lha-lnga: mo-lha* (god of females), *pho-lha* (god of males),

feathers, colored cloths and colored wool. The *pho-lha* and *sgra-bla* always circle at the various kinds of armor and weapons. The *gnod-sbyin* and *nor-lha* always circle at the various kinds of jewels. The Bon protectors and glorious defenders always circle at [fine] clothes, tiger and leopard [skins], and different grains. The *sa-bdag, klu* and *gnyan* always circle at the various kinds of dairy foods and sweets.

(iv) *Kyai!* We, the yogis, invite you, the mighty divine protectors. Stay upon this divine foundation. With body, speech and mind we devotedly prostrate and confess our broken vows and errors. To you we give offerings. Mighty divine protectors (*lha-srung gnyan-po*) we offer to you this castle of various kinds of jewels. Mighty divine protectors we offer to you these *rlung-rta* of five different colors. Mighty divine protectors we offer to you this *nam-mkha', ljang-bu*[488] and colored wool. Mighty divine protectors we offer to you the smoke of these various kinds of good wood. Mighty divine protectors we offer to you 360 types of medicinal substances and incense. Mighty divine protectors we offer to you types of [fine] clothing, tiger and leopard [skins], armor and weapons. Mighty protectors we offer you the three sweets, the three white foods, jewels, and various grains. Mighty divine protectors we offer to you the body, sound, smell, taste, and tactile [offerings], the ornaments of Bon.[489]

(v) Mighty divine protectors we offer to you this present of precious treasures. Mighty divine protectors we offer to you the five offerings[490] and eight offerings.[491] Mighty divine protectors we offer to you these yaks, sheep, birds, goats, elephants,[492] horses, various kinds of livestock, and so forth. Mighty divine protectors we offer to you these blue sheep, gazelles, deer, onagers, antelopes, female yaks,[493] and various other kinds of wild hoofed animals. Mighty divine protectors we offer to you these tigers, leopards, black bears, brown bear, wild dogs, wolves, and various other kinds of terrestrial carnivorous animals. Mighty divine protectors we offer to you these *shang-shang*,[494] vultures, eagles, falcons,

thab-lha (god of the hearth), *zhang-lha* (god of the maternal uncle) and *dgra-lha* (god arrayed against the enemy). For a description see Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, pp. 327, 328.

[488] For a description of *nam-mkha'* and *ljang-bu/rgyang-bu* see *rTa dang gnyis kyi bskang mdos*, Part Three, section iii, p. 247 (fns. 220, 221).

[489] Bon here denotes all of existence, and the universality of the offerings.

[490] Lamp, flower, incense, *tshan-chab* (water bowl), and *bshos-bu* (a kind of sacrificial cake).

[491] These are the offerings of the mChod 'bul goddesses. See Part Three, section iii, p. 247 (fn. 223).

[492] Alternatively, *Glang* can refer to oxen.

[493] In this context, the wild form of the female yak.

[494] A creature with the feet and wings of a bird and the body of a human.

khyung, and various other winged creatures. Mighty divine protectors we offer to you these giant clams, conches, fish, snakes, frogs, tadpoles, and various other kinds of aquatic animals.

(vi) By such offerings the divine protectors are pleased and the circle of *gshen* practitioners are benefited. Watch over us us in the daytime. Guard us in the nighttime. Wherever we go in the four cardinal directions and eight intermediate points guide us from the front and support us from behind. Conquer the enemies, thieves and bandits. Destroy the *'dre, srin, gdon*, and *bgegs*. Ensure our necessities and avert detriments. Grant us the capability to attain wealth and possessions. Grant us the capability to attain progeny. Grant us the capability to attain a good reputation and high standing. Grant us the capability to attain long life and vitality. Grant us the capability to attain [fine] clothing. Grant us the capability to attain foods of good fortune. Grant us the capability to attain livestock. Carry out whatever activities we wish. Victory, victory, the gods are victorious!

Transliteration of the gSas mkhar la btsas bstod pa *text*

(i) kye ye shes lha btsan gsas mkhar 'di / grub ni 'byung ba lnga la grub / bzhengs ni dad pa can gyi (= gyis) bzhengs / rten ni lha srung mchod pa'i rten / phyi ltar ri rgyal lhun po'i dbyib (= dbyibs) / nang ltar lha yi gzhal yas khang / dbus phyogs rin chen pho brang na / phyi nang gsang ba yang gsang gi / lha srung rin chen spungs ltar bzhugs /

(ii) shar phyogs dung gi gsas mkhar nas / zhi ba'i lha srung sprin dpung 'khrigs / lho phyogs g.yu yi gsas mkhar nas / rgyas pa'i lha srung skar ltar bkra / nub phyogs zangs kyi gsas mkhar nas / dbang gi lha srung glog ltar 'khyug / byang phyogs man shel gsas mkhar nas / drag po'i lha srung thog ltar 'dril /

(iii) mkha' la nyi zla skar gsum shar / ye shes lha srung rgyun du 'khor / rtse la 'ja' tshon sprin dpung 'khrigs / rdzu 'phrul lha srung rgyun du 'khor / 'byung ba rlung sgra 'u ru ru / las kyi lha srung rgyun du 'khor / rin chen sku mkhar mdzes pa la / 'jig rten lha srung rgyun du 'khor / rtsi shing sna tshogs dar shing la / 'byung lnga'i lha lnga rgyun du 'khor / kha dog sna lnga'i rlung rta la / mgon byed lha lnga rgyun du 'khor / bya spu dar tshon bal tshon la / yul sa gzhi bdag rgyun du 'khor / go cha mtshon cha sna tshogs la / pho lha sgra lha rgyun du 'khor / rin chen sna ma sna tshogs la / gnod sbyin nor lha rgyun du 'khor / dar zab stag gzig

'bru sna la / bon skyong dpal mgon rgyun du 'khor / dkar gsum mngar gsum sna tshogs la / sa bdag klu gnyan rgyun du 'khor /

(iv) kye lha srung gnyen (= gnyan) po khyed rnams ni / rnal 'byor bdag gis spyan drangs pas / lha gzhi'i steng du bzhugs so gsol / sgo gsum gus pas phyag 'tshal zhing / chags nyams 'gal 'khrul mthol lo bshags / khyed la mchod pa 'bul ba ni / rin chen sna tshogs sku mkhar 'di / lha srungs (= srung) gnyan po khyed la 'bul / kha dog sna lnga'i rlung rta 'di / lha srung gnyan po khyed la 'bul* / nam mkha' ljang bu bal tshon 'di /***/ bzang shing sna tshogs dud pa 'di /***/ sman spos sum brgya drug cu rnams /***/ dar zab stag gzig go mtshon rnams /***/ dkar mngar rin chen 'bru sna rnams /***/ gzugs sgra dri ro reg brgyan (rgyan) bon /***/

(v) rin chen gter gyi mchod pa 'di /***/ rnam lnga rnam brgyad mchod pa 'di /***/ g.yag lug bya ra glang rta sogs / g.yung dwags gzugs 'gros sna tshogs 'di /***/ rna rgo sha rkyang gtsos 'bri sogs / ri dwags gzugs 'gros sna tshogs 'di /***/ stag gzig dom dred 'phar spyang sogs / gcan gzan gzugs 'gros sna tshogs 'di /***/ shang shang rgod glag khra khyung sogs / 'dab chags gzugs 'gros sna tshogs 'di /***/ pir dung nya sbrul sbal cang (= cong) sogs / chu gnas gzugs 'gros sna tshogs 'di /***/

(vi) de ltar lha srung mchod pa'i (= yi) / lha srung dgyes pa'i yon tan gyis / sgrub gshen yon mchod 'khor bcas kyi / nyin gyi dus su bya ra mdzod / mtshan gyi dus su mel tse (= tshe) mdzod / phyogs bzhi mtshams brgyad gar 'gro yang / sngon dus (= du) bsu la rgyab du skyor / dgra rkun jag gsum dbang du bsdus / 'dre srin gdon bgeg (= bgegs) dul du rlogs / mthun rkyen sgrub la 'gal rkyen bzlog/ longs spyod nor gyi dngos grub stsol / rigs rgyud bu yi dngos grub stsol / dbang thang khas drag dngos grub stsol / tshe ring srog gi dngos grub stsol / lhab lhub gos kyi dngos grub stsol / rma g.yang zas kyi dngos grub stsol / dud 'gro phyug (= phyugs) gi (= kyi) dngos grub stsol / gang bsam 'phrin las grub par mdzod / rgyal lo rgyal lo lha rgyal lo /

* This line, lha srung gnyan po khyed la 'bul, repeats itself as a refrain. Subsequent occurences are designated: /***/

In order to complete this recapitulation of our study of indigenous deities we turn to passages found in *Pelliot 126*, one of the Tun-

huang manuscripts.[495] *Pelliot 126* describes the activities that transpired between representatives of the ancient Phywa and dMu tribes. In one section, it relates how the messenger of the Phwa petitioned the lord of the dMu, apparently because the former lacked a *sku-bla* (a type of protective and ancestral deity). Written circa the Ninth century, this text provides us with historical confirmation of the antiquity of some of the spirit-mediums' practices and of those recorded in related ritual texts. Among the most prominent of these is the use of an arrow festooned with cloth and a vulture feather as an offering article (para i). As we have seen, such arrows form one of the *lha-pa*'s most important presentation and healing instruments.

Other offerings recorded in *Pelliot 126* include meat, beer and dairy products, the very kinds of things still commonly presented to the indigenous pantheon (para ii) by the spirit-mediums and other types of religious specialists. The text mentions blue barleycorn, which also find a place in contemporary Tibetan rituals as well as in the Bon Phya-gshen systems of divination (see para viii of the *gZi brjid* excerpts, Part Four, section i, p. 350). The use of blue grain (barley) beer (*sngon-mo 'ding-ding 'bras*) in *Pelliot 126* is echoed in the *mKhas pa lde'u* (pp. 236, 237), where it notes that when the King Nya' khri btsan-po was to assume the rule of Tibet, "He gave up divine libations (*lha-skyems byang-khu*) and drank the blue grain beer (*dang-ding 'bras-chang sngon-mo*), the blue libations of men. He then proceeded to Gyi 'thing, in the land of humans (a place in front of Bon-ri in rKong-po)."

Another direct link between the ritual system described in the approximately 1100 year-old *Pelliot 126* and present day practices is the use of specially marked high quality livestock as offerings to the mountain divinities and other indigenous deities. As we have already learned, these types of animals also act as supports for the deities. Their regular mention in ritual texts through the pre-modern period establishes the perdurable nature of this custom:

[495] For this translation, I have used the copy of *Pelliot 126* found in Imaeda *et al.* 2000, p. 5, lns. 0138–0147. Due to the many questions still pending related to the vocabulary, grammar and syntax of the Tun-huang manuscripts, this should be viewed as a fairly free translation of the selected passages. In particular, the voice used in the story is open to question.

(i) "Now, I want to offer humble divine gifts to the magnanimous sKu-bla myi-thur.[496] May I have the honor just to see the form of the deity and make prostrations to him." The dMu lord replied, "Now, then, Phywa messenger, if you have come to offer to our *sku-bla*, what kinds of articles do you have as offerings? Do you have or not bamboo offerings from the lower regions, the divine arrow decorated by a perfect lammergeier feather? Do you have or not, the constituent of the divine arrow, a small piece of patterned cloth to suspend from it?"

(ii) "Do you have or not unworked gold? Do you have or not a *slag-cen*[497] with decorations of turquoise? Do you have or not nine *khal*[498] of prized[499] blue grain? Do you have or not liquid offerings of blue grain beer? Do you have or not a globular mass of cheese-cake[500] as large as a pheasant? Do you have or not meat roasted in butter as large as a partridge? Do you have or not cream as thick as a *'bre*?[501] Do you have or not a *lha-lug ngo-dmar* (divine sheep with a red face))?[502] Do you have or not a divine horse with white ears? Do you have or not a divine female yak[503] of variegated color? Do you have or not a divine male yak?"[504]

Transliteration of the Pelliot 126 *excerpt*

(i) da sku bla myi thur myi g.yo ba'i lha yon tsam 'bul du mchis na / lha zhal tsam mthong zhing phyag chud pa tsam du ci gnang

[496] In the Bon tradition, sKu-bla myi-thur (although the name is spelled slightly differently) is one of the many deities in the circle of the *yi-dam* Ge-khod. In the text *Ge khod kyi sman bskang yod* (New Collection of Bon *bka' brten, Ge khod sgrub skor*, vol. 121 (*stod-cha*), nos. 1249–1252), no. 1251, lns. 5, 6, it reads: "We satisfy the desires of sKu-bla mu-thur from the blazing deity castle of the fiery mountain of the southwest by medicines." (*lho nub me ri 'bar ba'i gsas mkhar nas / sku bla mu thur thugs dam sman gyis bskang /*).

[497] The equivalent of *slag-pa*. A kind of robe made from animal skins.

[498] A unit of dry measurement that in more recent times is generally equivalent to fifteen to twenty kilograms.

[499] *'Bru-bdun* appears to denote a special type or quality of barley hence, the word 'prized'.

[500] *mThud* (now spelled *thud*). Usually made of butter, dried whey and jaggery.

[501] A tray used for the measure of dry goods holding approximately one liter in volume.

[502] *Mar*, the current spelling for butter, should be modified to *dmar* (red) because white sheep with reddish faces are customarily offered to the *lha* and *btsan*, even by the contemporary *'brog-pa* of Upper Tibet. This type of sheep is called *lha-lug/btsan-lug dmar-zhal* or *dmar-rtsa*.

[503] *Lha 'bri-zal-mo*. In contemporary Upper Tibet, *'bri-zil-mo/'bri-zel-mo* designates female yaks with highly prized physical characteristics. Such yaks are offered to the *lha-mo* (white) and *klu-mo* (bluish) by the *'brog-pa*.

[504] *g.Yag-sham-po*. It is related to *g.yag-zhol-po*, the special type of male yak offered by the *'brog-pa* to the indigenous deities. It must have long hair, especially under its belly.

/ dmu rjes bka' stsal pa' / 'o na phywa'i pho nya nged kyi sku bla la mchod gsol du 'ongs na / mchod pa'i rkyen ci yod / 'jang smyug mchod la / thang kar yug gyis bsgron pa lha mda' yod dam myed / lha mda' 'i rkyen rgya dar ris phran yug kyis btag pa yod dam myed /

(ii) gser kha ma blangs pa yod dam myed / g.yu 'i slag cen yod dam myed / sngon mo 'bru bdun la khal dgu yod dam myed / sngon mo 'ding ding 'bras kyi khu khal dgu yod dam myed / mthud gong gong mo tsam mchis sam ma mchis / mar gyi sreg sha sreg pa tsam mchis sam ma mchis / O ma'i gdar bre kha tsam mchis sam ma mchis / lha lug ngo mar (= dmar) mchis sam ma mchis / lha rta snyan dkar mchis sam ma mchis / lha 'bri zal mo mchis sam mchis / lha g.yag sham po mchis sam ma mchis /

PART FOUR: SPIRIT-MEDIUMS IN THE BON LITERARY TRADITION

i) *The origin of the tradition of spirit-mediumship*

The Bon religion attributes its founding to sTon-pa gShen-rab, a divine figure believed to have lived well before the time of the historical Buddha. The activities and teaching of this great legendary personality are recorded in various biographical sources. The longest of these is called *mDo dri med gzi brjid*, and in published form it runs to some twelve volumes.[1] This biography of the founder of Bon is said to have been composed in the distant past by sTang-chen dmu-tsha gyer-med and transmitted through a vision to sPrul-sku blo-ldan snying-po (born 1360), who committed it to writing. It contains a large body of biographical, hagiographic and doctrinal material, as well as Bon mythological and historical references derived from diverse sources.

The *gZi brjid* details the nine branches or vehicles of the Bon religious teachings, as first propounded by gShen-rab in a celestial kingdom to a group of divine beings.[2] The first of these vehicles (*theg-pa*) is called Phya-gshen, which describes the Bon systems of astrology, healing rites, therapies, and divination.[3] These are delineated in a common part (*spyi yi sde*) and a special part (*sgos kyi bye brag*). The system of divination is subdivided into four separate branches (*sgos su rnam bzhi*), relating to divination by knots, divination by other instruments, divination by dreams, and the commands of deities (*lha yi bka' bab*). This latter subdivision is a kind of oracular utterance, and it is from this type of divination that the tradition of spirit-mediumship is attributed. As such, the Bon tradition clearly upholds the

[1] For a biographical overview of gShen-rab, see Kvaerne 1986. For an English translation of a Bon religious history (*bstan 'byung*) refer to Karmay 1972. In the Tun-huang manuscripts gShen-rab myi-bo/gShen-rabs kyi myi-bo is mentioned at least six times as a priest who performs a funeral rite (cf. Stein 2003: 598–600).
[2] These nine vehicles are detailed from *gZi brjid* excerpts in Snellgrove 1967. An introduction to the contents of the *gZi brjid* is found in Snellgrove 1967, pp. 3–8.
[3] For an exposition of Phya-gshen theg-pa derived from the *gZi brjid* see Snellgrove 1967, pp. 24–41.

antiquity of spirit-mediumship, placing its origin in a time even before the existence of the Zhang-zhung kingdom. While this claim in itself cannot be taken as a serious historical argument, it is indicative of the length of time encompassed by the legendary associations that are connected to the tradition of summoning deities into one's person.

The excerpt of the *gZi brjid* translated below pertains to the importance of the Phya-gshen teachings, and the way in which they are enumerated and classified. It is in this context that the role of the oracular tradition in the Bon religion is framed. Most importantly, the *gZi brjid* explicitly states that divination and the other systems enumerated in Phya-gshen are to be practiced with honesty and integrity on behalf of all living beings. The ethic of practice set forth here is one that is still embodied by the *lha-pa* of Upper Tibet. My association with the spirit-mediums indicates that this altruism helps to define the current tradition, and distinguishes it from other forms of spirit-mediumship, where self-aggrandizement or political calculation play a prominent part. While it may be argued by the skeptical that Bon and Buddhist teachings in Tibet have always appeared as a commodity to be merely bought and sold, my experiences with the spirit-mediums of our times establishes that there is far more to their motivations than mercenary intent. To the contrary, my findings demonstrate that in terms of motivation and commitment, the *lha-pa* of Upper Tibet are to be lauded—for they embody the ideals of Bon (as well as Buddhist) practice.

In this *gZi brjid* excerpt the grandeur and solemnity of the revelation of the Bon doctrines by sTon-pa gShen-rab are amply conveyed.[4] It begins with the assembling of a divine convocation and the revelation of the profundity of the teachings (paras i, ii). gShen-rab discloses the telos, which is the infinitely compassionate mind (para ii). Derived from this fundamental reality, the Phya-gshen vehicle is presented as an instrument for alleviating suffering (para iii). The elaborate classification system of the Phya-gshen teachings is then presented to the audience (paras iv–vii):

[4] See vol. 2, pp. 384, ln. 7 to 387, ln. 12, of the *gZi brjid* published by Bod-ljongs bod-yig dpe-rnying dpe-skrun khang, Lhasa: 2000. This section of the biography is entitled: *'Dus pa rin po che'i rgyud dri ma med pa gzi brjid rab tu 'bar ba'i rgyud (= mdo) las rgyal bus bka' khrims bstsal ba'i mdo*, pp. 283–499.

(i) At that time, when Prince sTon-pa gshen-rab was one year old,[5] he stayed together with rMa-lo and g.Yu-lo[6] at the Bar-po so-brgyad castle. At that time, on the very top of Ri-rab (Highest Mountain), in the country of the *phya*[7] called sNang-ldan g.yu-rtse (Radiance Turquoise Peak), inside the castle of sTegs-pa yang-thog, there was a *phya-gshen*[8] known as Legs-rgyal thang-po,[9] the son of the father of the *phya* rJe-ring nam. The one hundred children of the *phya* prince [Legs-rgyal] assembled and arrived at the castle of Bar-po so-brgyad. Then they gathered around sTon-pa, prostrated and presented him with offerings. Phya-gshen gtsug-phud offered a jeweled *ma 'dal*[10] with small piles of grain placed in it, and entreated sTon-pa: "Sacred teacher, the lamp who protects and sees to the welfare of living beings, holy prince, the laudable one venerated by gods and men, the Swastika[11] Bon [teachings] are extremely wide and innumerable. From the middle of your mind[12] reveal the essence of the relevant teachings to all us disciples." They thus made their request.

(ii) Then with a smiling countenance, Prince [sTon-pa] did speak: "Listen Phya-gshen gtsug-phud and other disciples, the time in which you have requested the teachings is eminently appropriate. The g.Yung-drung Bon [teachings] are extremely wide and innumerable, however they can be summarized and aggregated into nine vehicles. The view[13] descends from above, while the activity[14] climbs up from below. Ultimately, the essence of the doctrine can be distilled into one highest truth (*don-dam*), which unequivocally is the true basis of reality (*kun-gzhi*), the infinitude of the all-compassionate mind. Nevertheless, the methods to guide sentient beings have to be shown. Accessing the portal of Phya-gshen, the first vehicle, increases the happiness of living existence, the joy and comfort of living beings."

(iii) Having reached 100 human years or one *gshen* year, sTon-pa said: "In the following manner, I will explain the Bon portals one after another, beginning by explaining the first vehicle, Phya-gshen. Clearly distinguish what harms and what benefits by examining good and bad signs. Gauge the precise extent [of conditions] honestly, without deceit, and truthfully, without falsehood. Cure illness, rescue the dying, and increase the welfare, fortune and life [of people]. The prosperity and benefits to living beings will inevitably unfold in succession. Even [the value of] a moment's benefit is incomprehensible. In Bon, the superior state is the happiness of sentient beings. Therefore do whatever is required for their benefit and well being. Also provide for their body and life-force. Let the aspiration for the happiness of all be your basis, not selfishness, but indeed be dedicated to living beings. Keep this in the middle of your mind, Phya-gshen gtsug-phud." So spoke [sTon-pa].

(iv) Again [gTsug-phud] addressed [sTon-pa]: "Respected Prince sTon-pa, from what you have taught, the g.Yung-drung Bon [teachings] are extremely wide and innumerable, yet they can be epitomized into nine vehicles. From the Bon portal of Phya-gshen, the lowest vehicle, comes a common part and a special part. How exactly are these enumerated", asked [gTsug-phud]. "What is the essence of the activities and observances? Finally, what are the significance and benefits? Most certainly, please confer the teachings upon me." Thus spoke [gTsug-phud]. Then spoke sTon-pa, saying: "Listen intently Phya-gshen gtsug-phud. The Bon portal of the Phya-gshen vehicle has two common parts: *gto*[15] and therapies (*dpyad*). The special part is enumerated and shown in four sections: *pra-ltas-mo* (divination by signs and omens), *snang-mthong-rtsis* (astrological perception), *na-gso-gto* (rites to cure diseases), and *'chi-bslu-dpyad* (therapies rescuing from death). You must know these four different sections."

(v) "In the gloomy darkness of ignorance, the cycle of illusory existence, the six types of living beings[16] are tormented by disease [and its cause] ignorance. Through divination examine the good and bad signs. By astrology perceive the good and evil through calculation. Heal those who have become sick and cure by therapy those who are

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[5] Equivalent of 100 human years.

[6] These two figures were early disciples of sTon-pa shes-rab, who came to the mystical land of 'Ol-mo lung-ring as swallows. For background information on 'Ol-mo lung-ring see Martin 1995; 1999.

[7] Also spelled *phywa*. An early tribe and type of cosmogonic deity. Also refers to the first vehicle of the Bon doctrine.

[8] Bon religious practitioner of the first stage of teachings, the Phya-gshen. He belonged to the divine lineage of the *phya*.

[9] Also known as Phya-gshen gtsug-phud.

[10] Common offering object consisting of graduated rings placed on top of one another, which are filled with grains and precious substances.

[11] g.Yung-drung. This literally means 'everlasting' or 'unborn and undying,' an epithet of the Bon religion.

[12] *Thugs kyi dkyil nas.* An expression meaning 'with a high degree of forethought and concentration'.

[13] *lTa-ba.* In this context denotes the rDzogs-chen system of liberation. rDzogs-chen, a philosophy and methodology for mind training, comprises the highest vehicle of the nine vehicles of Bon. For further information see Tenzin Wangyel 1993; Tenzin Namdak 1995; Bru-sgom rGyal-ba g.yung-drung 1996; Reynolds 1996; Rossi 2000.

[14] *sPyod-pa.* Denotes the way of life namely, the fundamental activities of renunciation and non-violence.

[15] *gTo* are various types of rites in which protective deities are invoked. They are carried out for the benefit of living beings. See Norbu 1995, pp. 170–173, 264 (fn. 1), Karmay 1998, pp. 246–248.

[16] *'Gro-ba rigs-drug*: 1) *lha* (gods), 2) *lha-min* (titans), 3) *mi* (humans), 4) *byol-song* (animals), 5) *yi-dwags* (famished ghouls), and 6) *dmyal-ba pa* (hell beings).

dying. Both [divination and therapy] will fail if the life-potential [of the patient] has been expended. Even at that time, by the ephemeral truths of conditional reality,[17] [using divination and therapy the patient] will be fine for three days, and the benefit and virtue of this is incomprehensible. Phya-gshen gtsug-phud, keep this in the middle [of your mind]." Thus spoke [sTon-pa].

(vi) Again, Legs-rgyal thang-po entreated, "Respected Prince sTon-pa you have said that in the common part, *gto* (beneficial rites) and therapies are enumerated, from which four special parts are enumerated. The benefits to living beings notwithstanding, I am not able to distinguish very much. How is divination enumerated? How is astrology enumerated? How is *gto* enumerated? How are therapies enumerated? Concerning the four parts, divination, astrology, *gto* and therapies, firstly, which comes in the beginning? Intermediately, what are the causes effecting a cure? In conclusion, what comes last?"

(vii) Then sTon-pa spoke, "Listen intently Legs-rgyal thang-po: in divination, astrology, *gto* and therapies, these four, there is an explanation of the common part and an explanation of the special part. These two show how the common part is enumerated and the salient features of the special part. Firstly, in the common enumeration there are 360 divinations, containing the essence of the divination of signs. There are 360 astrological computations containing the essence of astrological perception.[18] There are 360 *gto* containing the essence of the *gto* that heals sickness. There are 21,000 therapeutic methods that contain the essence of therapies that save from death.[19] This is actually how the common part is enumerated. The special part is collected and summarized as follows. There are four types of divination: the *cu-thig* of the manifestation of primordial existence,[20] the prophecies of the *sgra-bla* of primordial knowledge,[21] the dreams of the primordial lords of aspiration,[22] and the mantic directives of the *lha* of primordial power.[23] Knowledge of the four types is imperative."

[17] There are two types of truths (*bden-pa-gnyis*): conditional truth (*kun-rdzob bden-pa*) and ultimate truth (*don-dam bden-pa*).

[18] For a description of astrology based on the Phya-gshen vehicle see Norbu 1995, pp. 147–162.

[19] For an explication of medicine based on the Phya-gshen vehicle see Norbu 1995, pp. 133–145.

[20] *Cu-thig/ju-thig* is a system of divination based on knotted cords. For a lucid exposition of this system of divination see Norbu 1995, pp. 189–198.

[21] *Ye-mkhyen sgra-bla'i mngon-shes* is the system of divination based on the revelations of the *sgra-bla* of primordial existence.

[22] *Ye-rje smon-pa'i rmi-lam* is the system of divination concerned with the interpretation of dreams, mediated by the *sgra-bla* of primordial existence.

[23] *Ye-dbang lha yi bka' bab/babs* is the tradition of deities who make oracular proclamations and initiate activities through the possession of individuals.

The *gZi-brjid* proceeds to expound upon the classification of the Phya-gshen vehicle. As a part of this gShen-rab briefly describes how the divination rites are to be performed.[24] The altar he prescribes with

[24] The antiquity of the Phya-gshen rituals is attested in the Tun-huang manuscripts. In one passage the practice of divination (*mo-btab*), beneficial rites (*gto*), therapies (*dpyad*), as well as *phya* (prognosis, vital force) are mentioned. See Karmay 1998, p. 247; Stein 2003, p. 596. In the Tun-huang manuscript *IOL 734* (only the transliterated text was available to me) we read: "The one hundred white-headed father *gshen* were assembled. They conducted divination (*mo-btab*) and made* prognoses (*phya*)." (*po gshen thod kar brgya bsogs te / mo btab phya bla'gste /*).

* The precise import of *bla'gste* is not clear.

In *Pelliot 1289* (*Choix de Documents Tibétains Conservés à la Bibliothèque Nationale Complété par Quelques Manuscrits de L' India Office et du British Museum*, vol. II), set in a highly obscure context, there is the following line (folio 3, ln. 4): "The *gto* and *dpyad* by Lha-bon 'ol-lcogs." (*lho* (= *lha*) *bon 'ol lcogs kyis* / gto dang dpyad*).

* This is followed either by a gap in the text or an additional word.

In *Pelliot 1051* (obtained from same source as above), a divination text of non-Buddhist origin with strong Bon ritual links, there is mention of the familiar personal and territorial deities as spoken by the diviner (lns. 30, 31): "Having found a beneficial divination [result], you will obtain the power to beget children (*srid*). You will not be sick. You have salutary (*'ches*) *sman*, *yul-sa*, *lha*, and *dgra-bla*, so offer to them. It is a very good divination." (*mo phan thogs pa rnyad cing / srid thob bar 'ong ngo / nad myed / sman dang lha yul sa dang dgra bla 'ches pa zhig yod gyis / mchod cig / mo bzang rab bo /*). *Pelliot 1051* also furnishes a more detailed account of divination and the importance of the *dgra-bla* and *lha* as personal protective deities. Two birds dwelling at the capital of Zhang-zhung Khyung-lung rngul-mkhar are used as metaphors to convey the results of the divination (lns. 45–51): "*Kye*! At Khyung-lung ni rngul-mkhar there is a little silver bird with a whitish cast (*dkar-yan*). The wings of the little jade bird are pure. It went to the heights of the blue sky. Down below, at the place once left behind, it consumes, choosing its plump grains*. The little jade bird was happy with its life. This is the result of that divination of the farmland *'bog A-pa* sky**. This divination of you, man, [shows] that your divine glory (*lha-dpal*) will grow like the plants of summertime. The demons (*'dre*) and misfortune (*byur*) will melt away like the snow of springtime. The *dgra-bla* who protect your divine glory are mighty***. By great blessings your glory rains down****. It is well and excellent if you conduct the prognostication (*phya*) of the life-force (*srog*) and the prognostication of military endeavor (*dgra*). From afar a man with happy news and wealth will quickly come. No terror or fear whatsoever will come. You have a great, good glorious *lha*, so unerringly do the religious observances (*rim-gro*) and rituals (*cho-ga*). It is a very good divination." (*kye khyung lung nị rngul mkhar na / rngul bye'u nị dkar yan pa / dzul (= dzu) bye'u gshogs re dag / dgung sngo nị mtho la gshegs / gshegs gị ni shul yog su / 'bras drug nị tsho mdams shing / gsol cing nị sku i' tshe / re sked ni rdzul (= dzu) gyi bye'u / 'di nị 'bog A pa gnam / gyi zhing gi mo la bab ste / myị khyod kyi mo 'di nị lha dpal nị dbyar gyị lhum (= ldum) bzhin du skye / 'dre dang byur nị dpyid kyi kha ba ltar zhu ste / lha dpal skyabs dgra bla nị gnyan / dpal byin po ches phabs pas / bzang ngo / srog phya dang dgra phya la btab na bzang rab / lam ring por (= nas) myi zhig dga' pa'ị gtam dang nor zhig dang myur du 'ong / 'jịgs pa dang bag tsha ba ci yang myi 'ong te / lha dpal bzang po ches zhig yod gyis / rim gro dang cho ga ma nor par gyis dang / mo bzang rab bo /*).

* *'Bras-drug* refers to grains but the exact signification of *drug* is not clear.

** The meaning of *'bog A-pa* is not known.

its white felt mat, and a simple array of offerings, very much resembles the one used by the *lha-pa* of Upper Tibet. The use of incense to attract the deities, and offerings of barleycorn, beverages, and the ritual role of the arrow are all elements present in the contemporary séance. The rectitude of the officiant of the divination rites is stressed in the text. Likewise it is believed that only those who lead a virtuous life can prevail as authentic *lha-pa*:[25]

> (viii) Firstly, there is divination by examining the signs. Blue barley is placed on a small white felt mat on the earth.[26] A lamp of turquoise[27] is suspended from an erected arrow,[28] the castle of the life-force.[29] The smoke of necterous wood should rise up. Conduct [the deity of the ritual] with fragrant incense. Give the first part of *phye-mar*[30] and beverages [to the deity]. Offer libations of *g.yu-brang bdud-rtsi*.[31] Reveal the proclamations[32] of the *gshen* practitioners of dBal-bon.[33] Worship Lha-chen phu-wer dkar-po.[34] [In this way] the *cu-thig* manifestation of primordial existence is exacted, the prophecies of the *sgra-bla* of primordial knowledge is practiced, the dreams of the primordial lords of aspiration are examined, and the revealed words of the *lha* of primordial power are observed. Divulge all the patient's history and name [to the deity]. Disclose in a straightforward manner the result of the divination. Record the defects, benefits and life-span [of the patient]. Clearly distinguish and separate the good from the bad. Disclose the truths and falsehoods as an impartial individual. Do in this way so that benefits ensue according to whatever is needed.

*** Instead of *dgra-bla*, it is also possible that *dgra-bla* and *lha* who protect the glory (*dpal*) is intended here but this is less likely.

**** Much of the word *phabs* (descends) is not legible in the text.

25 See pp. 390, ln. 20 to 391, ln. 11.

26 *gZhi-ma*. Can also refer to a table, platform or foundation.

27 Both the Zhang-zhung and Tibetan word for turquoise are used (*mtsho-ro g.yu*). Lamp (*sgron-ma*) is probably a metaphor for a particularly brilliant turquoise.

28 Both the Zhang-zhung and Tibetan word for arrow are used (*li-mar mda'*). *Li-mar* probably has the connotation of a very sharp arrow.

29 *Srog-mkhar* (life-force castle) refers to the support of the patient's life-force during the divination ritual. It is a very stable and protected place, invulnerable to attack, so that the life-force cannot be harmed.

30 Parched barley meal and butter preparation.

31 Libations of consecrated beer or spirits that are sometimes mixed with herbal ingredients.

32 *sMrang* are proclamations made by the officiant in order to open up communications with the deity presiding over the rite (cf. Norbu 1995: 163). The *smrang* can include the deity's theogony, origin myths, recognition of the pact between deity and officiant, and request for assistance from deity.

33 A tantric tradition believed to be of Zhang-zhung origin.

34 The main *sgra-bla* class deity of the Phya-gshen vehicle who is instrumental in divination practices. See Part Four, section ii.

Transliteration of the gZi brjid *excerpts*

(i) de'i tshe de'i dus na / rgyal bu ston pa gshen rab ni / dgung lo gcig bzhes nas / rma lo dang / g.yu lo dang / mkhar bar po so brgyad du thabs gcig tu bzhugs te / de'i tshe ri rab ri yi yang thog nas / yul phya yul snang ldan g.yu rtse ru / phya mkhar stegs pa yang thog nang nas / yab phya rje ring nas (= nam) gyi sras po / phya gshen legs rgyal thang po zhes bya ba / phya sras gyi (= kyi) khye'u brgya tham pa dang 'grogs nas / mkhar bar po so brgyad du phebs so / de nas ston pa la bskor ba ni byas / lha phyag ni 'tshal / mchod pa ni phul nas / phya gshen gtsug phud kyis rin po che'i ma 'dal la / 'bru yi tshom bu bkod pa gcig phul nas / ston pa la gsol ba / ston pa'i sgron ma 'gro ba'i dpal dang mgon / rgyal bu dam pa lha mi'i mchod 'os lags / g.yung drung bon la rgya che grangs mang yang / thugs kyi dkyil nas man ngag bcud phyung la / bdag cag 'khor rnam (= rnams) kun la bstan du gsol / zhes gsol to /

(ii) de la rgyal bus zhal 'dzum par mdzad de gsungs pa / nyon cig phya gshen gtsug phud las sogs 'khor / zhus pa'i don la [de] skabs la ran te phog / g.yung drung bon la rgya che grangs mang yang / mdo ru bsdus na theg pa rim dgu 'dus / lta ba yas phub spyod pa mas yar 'dzeg / mthar ni don dam thig le gcig la bsdu / kun gzhi byang chub sems kyi klong du nges / 'on kyang sems can 'dul thabs bstan pa la / dang po phya gshen theg pa'i sgo ru 'jug / 'gro la phan bde snang srid dga' ba bskyed /

(iii) bdag kyang bon sgo rim pa 'chad tshul la / mi lo brgya lon gshen lo gcig lon nas / theg pa dang po phya gshen 'chad par byed / skyon yon pra ltas nyes legs drang shan 'byed / bden rdzun yo drang chag dang tshad la gzhal / nad gso 'chi bslu tshe g.yang dpal gsum bskyed / 'gro la phan bde'i rim pa shugs kyis 'byung / dar tsam de yang yon tan bsam las 'das / sems can dga' ba bon gyi rab ma yin / de phyir gang la gang dga'i phan thog (= thogs) bya / lus srog yin kyang de'i phyogs su gtong / rang 'dod med na 'gro don de yin mod / sems bskyed rtsa ba cha gcig de la thug / phya gshen gtsug phud thugs kyi dkyil du zhog / ces gsungs so /

(iv) de la yang gsol pa / rgyal bu ston pa lags / g.yung drung bon la rgya che grangs mang yang / mdor bsdus theg pa rim dgu gsungs pa'i / theg pa'i tha ma phya gshen bon sgo las / spyi yi sde dang sgos kyi bye brag gi / rnam grangs nges par brjod na du mchis sam

/ spyod dang 'jug pa'i mtshan nyid ji ltar lags / tha ma don dang yon tan ji ltar lags / nges par bdag la bka' zhig stsal du gsol / ces zhus so / de la ston pas bka' stsal pa / nyon cig phya gshen gtsug phud nyon / phya gshen theg pa'i bon sgo la / spyi ru gto spyad (= dpyad) gnyis yin te / sgos su rnam grangs bzhi ru bstan / pra ltas mo dang snang mthong rtsis / na gso gto dang 'chi bslu dpyad / rnam pa bzhi ru shes par bya /

(v) 'gro drug sems can ma rigs pas / 'khrul 'khor mun pa'i smag rum na / ma rig nad kyis gdung ba la / bzang ngan pra ltas mo yis rtags (= brtag) / legs nyes snang mthong rtsis kyis gzhal / na bar gyur na gto yis gso / 'chi bar gyur na dpyad kyis bcos / las kyis 'chad na gnyis ka sdug / kun rdzob re zhig bden pa tsam / dus la bab kyang gung gsum bde / de gyur yon tan bsam las 'das / phya gshen gtsug phud dkyil du zhog / ces bka' stsal to /

(vi) de la yang gsol ba / rgyal bu ston pa gshen rab lags / spyi ru gto dpyad rnam grangs las / sgos su rnam grangs bzhi bzhi gsungs pas / 'gro la phan pa de ltar te / da rung cung tsam shan ma phyed / mo la rnam grangs du ru mchis / rtsis la rnam grangs du ru mchis / gto la rnam grangs du ru mchis / dpyad la rnam grangs du ru mchis / mo rtsis gto dpyad rnam pa bzhi / dang po thog mar gang gis snga / bar du gso rkyen gang gis byed / tha ma las mtha' gang gis bsdus /

(vii) de la ston pas bka' stsal pa / nyon cig legs rgyal thang po nyon / mo rtsis gto dpyad bzhi po las / spyi ru bshad dang sgos kyi bshad / spyi ru rnam grangs bstan pa dang / sgos su 'dus so 'dzin pa gnyis / thog mar spyi yi rnam grangs las / pra ltas mo yi mtshan nyid la / mo pra sum brgya drug cu mchis / snang mthong rtsis kyi mtshan nyid la / gab rtse sum brgya drug cu mchis / na gso gto yi mtshan nyid la / gto thabs sum brgya drug cu mchis / 'chi bslu dpyad kyi mtshan nyid la / dpyad thabs nyi khri gcig stong mchis / spyi ru bstan pa'i rnam grangs nges / sgos su bsdus pa'i 'dus so la / mo la rnam pa bzhi yin te / ye srid 'phrul gyi cu thig dang / ye mkhyen sgra bla'i mngon shes dang / ye rje smon pa'i rmi lam dang / ye dbang lha yi bka' bab dang / rnam pa bzhi ru shes par bya /

(viii) dang po mo pra brtag pa yang / gzhi ma ling phying dkar po la / sngon mo nas kyi sgron ma blug / mtsho ro g.yu yi sgron ma

btags / li mar mda' yi srog mkhar btsug / bdud rtsi shing gi dud pa sbreng / dri zhim spos kyis gshegs shul mtshon / phye dmar 'ol dkon phud kyis mchod / g.yu brang bdud rtsi skyems kyis gsol / bsgrub (= sgrub) gshen dbal bon smrang gis bkrol / lha chen phu wer dkar po mchod / ye srid 'phrul gyi cu thig bdar / ye mkhyen sgra bla'i mngon shes bsgrub / ye rje smon pa'i rmi lam brtag / ye dbang lha yi bka' bab bya / snga ltang thams cad ming nas bzung / phyi ltang thams cad thig la btab / skyon yon tshe tshad yi ger bris / bzang ngan legs nyes drangs (= drang) shan phyes / bden rdzun srid pa'i gzu'o bya / gang la gang dgos ji bzhin du / phan gdab rim pa de ltar bya /

The system of divination known as the 'Mantic Directives of the *Lha* of Primordial Power' (*ye-dbang lha yi bka' bab/babs*), which embraces the tradition of spirit-mediumship, has been commented upon by the eminent Bon scholar Lopon Tenzin Namdak.[35] In this context, the word *bka' babs* refers to the revelations or prophecies made by the deities. In his unpublished commentary on the Phya-gshen vehicle he writes that the class of deities known as *srid-pa'i sgra-bla* (*sgra-bla* of existence) appears to have been used in ancient times by the spirit-mediums.[36] This tradition gradually fell into obscurity and was replaced by a degenerate tradition in which demonic entities possessed spirit-mediums:[37]

> It appears that the fourth part[38] concerns the various *sgra-bla* of existence. Although there may be cases of this, the authentic tradition declined as worldly *dregs-pa*,[39] divisions of *g.yen*,[40] ghosts afflicting the

[35] Slob-dpon bsTan 'dzin rnam-dag. The chief scholar of sMan-ri monastery is now residing in the Kathmandu valley at his monastery Khri-brten nor-bu rtse.

[36] This commentary is entitled *Phywa gshen theg pa'i rnam bshad gsal byed me long*. It was written in *'khyug* (cursive script). See pp. 13, 14.

[37] In the 1950s, the Tibetan government and ecclesiastical establishment commonly patronized oracles who relied on the malevolent spirits of deceased individuals (*gshin 'dre* and *rgyal-po*). These ghosts seemed to have attained a religious status well beyond that enjoyed by the mountain gods. See Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, pp. 417–421, 432–439.

[38] Refers to the fourth system of divination *ye-dbang lha yi bka' bab*.

[39] Spirits of various kinds having an angry nature.

[40] Comprised of 33 types of non-human beings inhabiting the environment (*g.yen-khams sum-cu-rtsa-gsum*), which are vertically divided into the upper, intermediate and lower spheres. Included among them are the elemental spirits often cited in this work such as the *lha, dmu, gnyan, btsan, bdud, sman, klu, 'dre, and srin*. See Norbu 1995, p. 252 (fn. 2).

> living and dead, and their support inside the body, were used to advise on and determine future activities. Reliance on these [decadent] traditions was greatly propagated in Tibet especially by the Tibetan government, which had supreme confidence in such traditions [to discern innermost thoughts and sentiments]. However, the ancient tradition is authentic, and we cannot say that the support of the *bsen-mo*[41] inside the body at present is the same. The source of the authentic tradition is no longer clearly discernible [in the contemporary tradition].

The adoption of what appears to have been a degenerate tradition of spirit-mediumship, and its impact on Tibetan culture and society in the pre-Communist period, is beyond the scope of this study. However, it must be said that it appears to have had a strong social effect, contributing to strained sectarian relations and the depreciation of the native divinities. The *lha-pa* of Upper Tibet were not generally held in high esteem by the lamaist religious establishment of Tibet, due to their reliance on lower 'worldly' deities and their modest socioeconomic status. As we have seen, however, their practice does in fact, emulate the Bon ideal of selfless-service on which the Phya-gshen traditions are based. It should also be noted that the institution of oracles in Lhasa was, with its aristocratic patronage, prone to satisfying the whims of the rich and powerful. In contrast, in the harsh environmental and economic conditions of Upper Tibet, the spirit-mediums of today are impelled to remain truer to the altruistic ideal of the Phya-gshen, and provide for the vital needs of their community. Also, the question of legitimacy and antiquity favors the *lha-pa* of Upper Tibet over those mediums who were possessed by ghosts of the murdered and deities of foreign pedigree. There are many correspondences between the *lha-pa*'s autochthonous mountain gods and the *sgra-bla* of primordial existence on which the ancient tradition of spirit-mediumship is alleged to have depended. These functional parallels and their possible historical interconnections warrant close analysis in section iii.

Transliteration of Phya-gshen commentary excerpt

bzhi pa ni srid pa'i sgra bla sogs kyi skor la bsten pa yod srid kyang / de 'dra'i khungs ldan gyi srol nub nas / 'jig rten gyi dregs pa g.yen sde dang / shi gson 'dre rgod gang dag khog tu bsten nas / ma 'ongs pa'i bya byed kyi gros thag chod pa'i blo 'gel ba 'di rnams

[41] A kind of female demon. Referred to here as an example of a pernicious spirit.

kyi srol bod du dar khyab che zhing / khyad par du bod gzhung gis kyang blo phugs gtad sa 'di lta bu'i lugs red / 'on kyang gna' bo'i lugs khungs yod dang / deng dus kyi bsen mo khog brten gnyis mtshungs zhes smra bar mi nus te / sngar lugs kyi khungs gsal bar ma mthong ngo /

ii) *Phu-wer*

As we have seen in the *gZi brjid*, gShen-rab states that the deity of the four systems of divination found in the Phya-gshen vehicle is Phu-wer dkar-po. Phu-wer appears to be the Zhang-zhung equivalent of 'Gegs-rgyal (Obstruction Conqueror). By its inclusion in gShen-rab's biography this deity enjoys very ancient legendary origins. Phu-wer dkar-po is closely related to the *sgra-bla* class of deities, but has an irenic, not martial character. A Bon divination text for Phu-wer survives in the *Mi-pham gsung 'bum* of the rNying-ma scholar Jam-mgon 'ju mi-pham rgya-mtsho (1846–1912).[42] This text is attributed to Dran-pa nam-mkha', one of at least two personalities, who lived no later then the Eighth century.[43]

While it is not at all clear if Phu-wer was ever a deity that possessed spirit-mediums, his participation in a ritual to divine the future finds resonance in rituals that are part of the modern trance ceremony of indigenous deities. In both the ancient and modern variants of the divination ritual, use of the *mda' dar* and *me-long* are made.

[42] One of the most eminent figures in the non-sectarian movement. For background information see Smith 2001, pp. 230–233.

[43] The colophon of this text reads: "The performance of the Phu-wer of speech* is easy to do and the consummation quick. I Bla-chen [dran-pa nam-mkha'], on behalf of future beings [authored] this essence of the method of performance of the Phu-wer sisters and brothers as a pithy explication of divination and omens [rituals]. It was given to Lha-btsan rgyal-po (a mountain deity) of mDo-gam (eastern Tibet). This text looks like a wish-fulfilling jewel. May those who have a karmic connection with it make its acquaintance" (*phu wer gsung gi sgrub pa ni / bya ba sla la dngos grub myur / bla chen bdag gis phyi rabs don du / mo spra don 'dus pa phu wer lcam dral sgrub thabs yang bcud / mdo gam lha btsan rgyal po la gtad / 'di ni yid bzhin nor bu 'dra / las 'phro can dang 'phrad par shog /*). This text, *Phu wer phya gshen rno mthong gi sgrub pa* (*The Performance of the Lucid Prognostication of Phya-gshen Phu-wer*), is one section (nos. 844–847) of a chapter entitled *Srid pa 'phrul gyi ju thig gi dpyad don snang gsal sgron me bzhugs* (*The Bright Lamp of the Diagnosis of the Ju-thig of Miraculous Existence*), which is found in volume *Ja* of Mi-pham's *gSung 'bum* (*Collected Works*) (sDe-dge dgon-chen, vol. 16). Mi-pham appropriated this text in its entirety from the Bon-po without alteration.

* Most deities have body, speech and mind performances, relating to their different functions and applications.

The theme of the *me-long* as having the capability to mirror all of existence is common to both the Phya-gshen and modern forms of prognostication. Furthermore, pacific (white) forms of mountain deities, whose appearance is not unlike Phu-wer, are responsible for divination in the trance ceremonies of the *lha-pa*.

The Phu-wer divination ritual is based upon the use of a *me-long* in which *pra* (signs and visions) appear. In the preliminary practices, which include offerings to the same classes of deities propitiated by the *lha-pa* (para i), the help of the environment-bound spirits is enlisted. This is accomplished so that these spirit owners of the locale help, rather than impede, the ritual.

The main practices of the ritual include the construction of a mandala and a special type of arrow to be used as a support for the deity (paras ii–iv). This is followed by an ensemble of offerings, which includes yaks, sheep, goats, wild ungulates and birds (para. v). These animal gifts (real and simulated) are characteristic of the Phya-gshen, Buddhist and contemporary *lha-pa* traditions relating to indigenous deities in Upper Tibet. As noted, the ritual gifting of special animals is a cultural phenomenon of much historical continuity, explaining its existence in diverse religious traditions. Interestingly, the use of *sbrang-chang* (mead) and *rgun-chang* (grape wine) as offerings for Phu-wer seems to point to early cultural influences coming from Central Asia or the West.[44] It is also curious that despite being a pacific deity, Phu-wer is the recipient of meat and alcohol, just like the ambivalent deities of the environment-bound pantheon.

The Phu-wer ritual stresses the importance of purity (para v), a theme of great significance for the *lha-pa* as well. The male forms of Phu-wer are not alone, for their three sisters and circle of eight *sman* also find mention in the text (paras vi and ix). Deities of both genders, particularly in dyadic arrangements, are a hallmark of the *lha-pa*'s pantheon of presiding and possessing deities. As we have seen, male and female deities often work in concert for the spirit-mediums, as they do in this ritual. The praises (*bstod-pa*) component of the text (paras viii–x) was composed in the traditional manner with lines of seven syllables, endowing it with the charcteristic cadence of the hymns to the indigenous gods:

[44] It is has even been theorized that Phu-wer represents a Greco-Roman deity (Norbu 1998: 2).

(i) The performance of the Phu-wer god of fortune. We prostrate to the god Phu-wer. If you want to realize this secret performance there are preliminary practices, main practices and concluding practices respectively. Firstly, the preliminary practices: go to a white rocky mountain with a proliferation of herbs and trees, or to the bank of a mighty lake. Offer to the *gzhi-bdag*, *lha*, *klu*, and *brtan-ma* by conveying *chab-gtor*[45] and libations. Petition them to become allied with you. That is the sequence of preliminary practices.

(ii) Secondly, the main practice: At an auspicious place [make] a round mandala with eight petals and equal spaces between each of them. The eight petals are white, the center yellow and the intermediate spaces red. It is flanked by a blue ring circumscribed with [contrasting-colored] swastikas. [The mandala] is surrounded by 28 [pieces] of *sur-dkar*.[46] On a vulture [feather] arrow hang cloths of five colors, five types of gems, and five different colored tufts of wool.

(iii) On a full width strip of white cloth draw the form of Phu-wer. In the middle [of the cloth] draw the yellow god Phu-wer dressed in white silk with sun and moon designs. In his right [hand] he holds a *ju-tig*[47] and in his left, a *me-long*. On the right side [of the cloth] draw the *dkyel*[48] white Phu-wer wearing a blue *ral-ga*[49] with rainbows. In his [right] hand he holds a *ju-thig* and in his left, a cuckoo bird.[50] On the left side [of the cloth] draw the crystal white Phu-wer wearing a white silk *ral-ga*. In his right [hand] he holds a *rtsis-byang*[51] and in his left, a *ju-thig*.

(iv) Draw their three sisters[52] with blue bodies and white silk *go-zu*.[53] In their right [hands] they have *me-long* and in their left, they hold

[45] An offering to request a place for the ritual from the local deities. It usually consists of vertically arranged graduated basins of water in which medicinal ingredients are added.
[46] Same herb as white *ba-lu* (a rhododendron). See *'Khrung dpe dri med shel gyi me long*, pp. 133, 134.
[47] Types of knotted cords used in divination.
[48] The most common occurrence is *dkyel-chen*, meaning 'big mind'. In the text the spelling *dkyil* (middle/center) is found but this does not seem appropriate in this context.
[49] A kind of cloth robe that appears to have had wide sleeves and long tassels.
[50] When he came down to the mythical land of 'Ol-mo lung-ring, gShen-rab manifested as a cuckoo bird. Considered a divine bird, the cuckoo makes a melodious sound.
[51] An astrological computation tablet. It comes in different shapes and is used to make numerical computations. In Imperial times, there were supposed to be nine different types of tablets (*byang-bu*), on which primarily legal judgments were written. See *mKhas pa lde'u*, pp. 261, 262.
[52] The term *lcam* could also possibly denote the three wives of the Phu-wer deities.
[53] A coat that magically expands when the wearer is attacked.

bum-pa. All [figures] are posed standing erect. This [painting] is suspended from the shaft of the arrow. The [dried] hearts of a bat, cuckoo and crane, a *rgyal-mtshan* (victory banner), white silver *me-long*, and white lamb's fleece are hung [on the arrow]. It is erected in the middle of the mandala.

(v) The offering ingredients are various grain meals put in beer, *'brang-rgyas* with swastikas of butter,[54] and the forms of a yak, sheep, goat, and various birds and wild ungulates nicely arranged in a basin. It is decorated with meat from the upper part of an ewe's carcass. *Yu-ti* (beer), mead and grape wine are put in [the basin]. Place it in the middle of the mandala. Burn incense three times. Fumigate [your defilements] with poison smoke. Do *dmu-phod.*[55] Make ablutions with lustral liquids.

(vi) Push away obstructions [from the ritual zone]. Seal its borders. Desist from speech and keep secret from others. Then, in succession, visualize yourself as Phu-wer, and the mandala as a tent of five types of rainbows. Inside this [tent] visualize the three Phu-wer brothers and their three sisters according to their forms in the drawings. Envisage their circle of eight subsidiary *sman* displaying *me-long* in their hands and playing flutes.

(vii) From their abode invite the [Phu-wer] deities to pass into [the mandala]. Envisage them revealing to you yourselves the prophecies of the three worlds and all good qualities. Signal them with mantras. From the middle of your heart radiate these mantras on rays of light directly in front of the deities. Consequently, envisage them revealing subterranean treasures to you yourselves. Then, desisting from other speech, continually recite the mantra *Om ha ram spungs so lam gsal khod do 'du.*[56] By reciting it many, many times the sun and moon will rise, a lamp will appear before you, you will be picking flowers, you will be given victuals, and the smell of fragrant medicines will be perceptible.[57]

(viii) Thereafter, praise [the deities] in this way: *Kye!* In a numen castle of bright turquoise mists, a palace of bright rainbows, rise up divine assembly of secret Phu-wer [gods]. Proclaiming King Phu-wer you are a golden [colored] noble man whose body is attired in white silk. In your right [hand] you hold a conch white *ju-thig.* Reveal to the *gshen*

[54] A kind of *gtor-ma* probably made from the meal and beer mixture mentioned in the text.
[55] A system of ablutions, the details of which are no longer clear.
[56] This mantra is in the language of the *lha.* It is visualized with the *Om* syllable in the middle, with the remaining syllables revolving around it.
[57] This is a visionary sequence to be experienced by the proper execution of the ritual.

the good and bad, the benefits and detriments. In your left [hand] you hold a silver *me-long* in which all of existence clearly appears. Reveal the good qualities of existence to us.

(ix) Great *dkyel* Phu-wer you are white [colored] and attired in a blue *ral-ga* with rainbows. In your hand you hold a lamp of brightness. Reveal all existence to us. Great crystal white Phu-wer, you are conch [colored] and dressed in a white *ral-ga.* In your hands is a *rtsis-byang* and *ju-thig.* Frankly, distinguish every good quality and fault. Three sisters, doers of good, makers of clarity, you are blue-colored and dressed in white costumes. You hold *me-long* and *bum-pa* in your hands. Reveal to us the capability for attainment and the good fortune of perspicacity. A circle of eight subsidiary *sman* surrounds you.

(x) Proclaiming brother and sisters come here now. We have many foods to invite you with. When the proclaiming brothers and sisters come you have light rays and rainbows *thibs se thibs.*[58] You have jeweled ornaments *si li li.*[59] You have cane flutes and bamboo flutes *kyu ru ru.*[60] You have white silver *me-long da la la.*[61] You sing and dance *khrigs se khrig.*[62] Reveal all existence to us. Thus speak and play the flute. Burn incense. Then to yourselves the deities will reveal all the good and bad, and underground treasures. This is the sequence of the performance of the main practices.

(xi) Thirdly, the concluding practices are the completion of the performance. Hang the supports and painting on your body. Divide the offering components into three parts. Burn one part with incense. Enjoy one part yourselves. Keep one part as a support [for the deities]. Although you are given a horse do not divulge the identity of the thief.[63] Regularly make offerings and burn incense. Then [yourselves and the deity] will accompany [one another] like a body and its shadow. They in order, are the concluding practices.

[58] *Thibs se thibs* indicates that the light rays and rainbows are full of radiance and flashing.
[59] *Si li li* shows that the ornaments are jingling.
[60] The onomatopoeia *kyu ru ru* replicates the melodious strains of the flute.
[61] *Da la la* conveys that the *me-long* are round, uniform and perfectly formed.
[62] *Khrigs se khrig* depicts that the song and dance are rhythmic and in time.
[63] This proverb-like line seems to indicate that certain restrictions apply to the disclosure of information obtained through divination. If the identity of a thief was revealed it could lead to his murder, or the diviner could suffer recriminations. A horse is traditionally a *'brog-pa's* most valuable possession.

Transliteration of the Phu wer phya gshen rno mthong gi sgrub pa *text*

(i) phu wer g.yang gi sgrub pa / phu wer lha la phyag 'tshal lo / gsang ba'i sgrub pa 'di nyams su len par 'dod na / sngon 'gro dngos gzhi rjes kyi rim pa'o / dang po sngon 'gro la / brag ri dkar po shing rtsi rgyas pa'am / mtsho gnyan gyi 'gram du 'gro la / chab gtor gser skyems btang zhing / gzhi bdag lha klu brtan ma mchod / sdong sgrogs bcol ba'i snyan gsan gsol / de ni sngon 'gro'i rim pa'o /

(ii) gnyis pa dngos gzhi ni / bkra shis pa'i sa la dkyil 'khor zlum po 'dab brgyad gong ras bcas pa la / lte ba ser la 'dab brgyad dkar / gong ras dmar / mu khyud sngo de / la g.yung drung ra bas bskor / sur dkar nyi shu rtsa brgyad kyis bskor / mda' bya rgod ma gcig la dar sna rin po che lnga bal tshon lnga btags /

(iii) dar dkar po kha gang la phu wer gyi sku bri ba ni / dbus su lha phu wer ser po dar dkar nyi zla ris gsol ba / g.yas ju thig g.yon me long bsnams pa gcig bri / g.yas su dkyil (= dkyel) phu wer dkar po ni / sngon po 'ja' tshon ral ga gyon pa / g.yas ju thig g.yon khu byug bsnams pa bri / g.yon du shel phu wer dkar po ni / dar dkar ral ga gsol ba / g.yas rtsi byang dang g.yon ju thig bsnams pa bri /

(iv) lcam gsum sngon mo dar dkar go zu can g.yas gsum me long / g.yon gsum bum pa bsnams pa bri / kun kyang bzengs sku bri / de mda' yi mgul du btag / pha wang khu byug khrung khrung gi snying dang rgyal mtshan dngul dkar me long lpags bu dkar po btags / de dkyil 'khor dbus su 'dzug /

(v) mchod rdzas 'bru sna'i phye ma la g.yu (= yu) ti bran / 'brang rgyas mar gyi g.yung drung can / g.yag lug ra gsum / bya dang ri dwags sna tshogs kyi gzugs byas la rin po che'i snod du bshams / g.yang mo lug gi stod shas brgyan / yu ti sbrang chang rgun chang gis bran / dkyil 'khor dbus su bzhag / dus gsum bsang bya / dug phyung bya /dmu phod bya / tshan khrus bya /

(vi) bgegs bskrad / mtshams bsdams / ngag bcad / mi la gsang / de nas ting 'dzin rim pa ni / bdag phu wer du bsgom / dkyil 'khor 'ja' tshon sna lnga'i gur du bskyed / de'i nang du phu wer mched gsum dang lcam gsum bris sku bzhin du bskyed / 'khor sman phran brgyad phyag na me long ston zhing gling bu dkrol bar bsam /

(vii) gnas nas spyan drangs la bstim / bdag la yon tan thams cad dang srid pa gsum gyi mngon shes ston par bsam / snying pos rgyud bskul sngags kyi 'od zer thugs ka nas 'phos / mdun gyi lha la phog bas bdag la sa 'og gi gter rnams ston par bsam / de nas snying po 'di smra ba bcad la bsgrangs / Om ha ram spungs so lam gsal khod do 'du / stong bzlas pas nyi zla shar dang sgron me 'degs / me tog btu dang zhal zas ster / dri bzang sman rnams dri bro 'ong /

(viii) de nas bstod de 'di skad do / kye / g.yu bun 'od kyi gzhal yas kyi / 'ja' tshon 'od kyi pho brang nas / phu wer gsang ba'i lha tshogs bzhengs / smra byed phu wer rgyal po ni / gser gyi mi bo dar dkar lus la gyon / g.yas na dung gi ju thig bsnams / bzang ngan skyon yon gshen la ston / g.yon na dngul gyi me long bsnams / snang srid thams cad sa ler gsal / bdag la snang srid yon tan ston /

(ix) dkyel chen phu wer dkar po ni / sngon po 'ja' tshon ral ga gsol / phyag na snang byed sgron me 'dzin / snang srid thams cad bdag la ston / shel chen phu wer dkar po ni / dung mdangs dar dkar ral ga gyon / rtsi byang ju thig phyag na bsnams / skyon yon kun gyi drangs shan phyes / lcam mo bzang byed gsal mdzad gsum / sngon mo dar dkar gos su gyon / me long bum pa phyag na bsnams / rno g.yang dngos grub bdag la ston / 'khor du sman phran brgyad kyis bskor /

(x) smra byed lcam dral da tshul byon / 'od zas mang po bdag la yod / smra byed lcam dral byon tsam na / gzha' tshon 'od zer thibs se thibs / rin chen rgyan cha si li li / rba gling snyug gling kyu ru ru / dngul dkar me long da la la / glu len bro brdung khrigs se khrig / bdag la snang srid sa ler ston / ces brjod cing gling bu'i sgra btang / bsang bya / de nas bdag la bzang ngan thams cad dang sa 'og gi gter yang ston / dngos gzhi sgrub thabs kyi rim pa'o /

(xi) gsum pa mjug gi rim pa ni / sgrub pa thon nas sku dang rten rnams rang gi lus la bcing / mchod rdzas cha gsum bya / cha gcig bsang bya / cha gcig rang gis rol / cha gcig rten du bcang / rta byin yang rkun ma ngos mi bzung / dus su bsang dang mchod pa bya / de nas lus dang grib mar 'grogs / de ni mjug gi rim pa'o /

Two texts for the white Phu-wer are found in the Bon *bka' brten* collection. Rather than divination, the function of Phu-wer in these works is to insure long life, health, fertility, and to make rain fall or stop. These kinds of pedestrian activities are of course also accomplished by the environment-based pantheon, bringing Phu-wer in close functional correspondence with the mountain and lake deities. The rituals in the two Phu-wer texts of the *bka' brten* are attributed to the primordial *gshen* practitioner Klu-grub ye-shes snying-po, who conquers harmful *klu* and allies himself with those *klu* that are beneficial.[64] Although these two ritual performances are devoted to Phu-wer his identity and role are obscured by the Bon tutelary deity dBal-gsas rngam-pa, which dominates as the central devotional figure. Unlike the Phya-gshen Phu-wer divination ritual preserved in Mi-pham rgya-mtsho's collected works, the two Phu-wer rituals featuring dBal-gsas rngam-pa are tantric in character and heavily rely on the recitation of mantras and the visualization of this tutelary deity. The peculiar form of dBal-gsas found in these texts has iconographic attributes of the *khyung*, and his main role is to control the various *klu*. So different in character are the rituals and the activities of Phu-wer that it is questionable if the same deity is really intended in the respective Phya-gshen and tantric performances, despite the god having the same namesake. Be that as it may, the disparate ritual practices of Phu-wer in Bon literature include all the activities subsumed under the purview of the mountain and lake deities of the spirit-mediums.

The text known as the *Untied Performance of the Life Master White Phu-wer of Klu-grub ye-shes snying-po* contains *a tshe-grub* (life empowerment ritual), which is designed to increase the human life-span and well-being.[65] The text begins with the *cho-rabs*, the story of the mythic precedent for the ritual. This story is followed by a description of Ye-shes snying-po. The ritual performance itself is divided into the following major sections:

[64] Biographical lore about this mythical Bon practitioner is found in Karmay 1972, pp. xxii, xxiii.

[65] See New Collection of Bon *bka' brten*, vol. 229, nos. 378–394. As the title of the text indicates, *Tshe bdag phu wer dkar po'i sgrub pa klu grub ye shes snying po'i dkrol* (= *bkrol*)* *ba* is attributed to the mythic Bon practitioner Klu-grub ye-shes.

* *bKrol* literally means to 'untie' but in this context it is defined as: 'to explain clearly'.

1) An explanation of aging. States that the skin becomes old by wind and fire, the bones by salt and beer, and the flesh by women (sex).
2) The assembling of the ritual ingredients, the construction of the mandala, the arrangement of the altar, and visualizations.
3) Long life mantras.
4) Praises for dBal-gsas rngam-pa and the four chief *klu-mo* goddesses.
5) The ritualists visualize themselves as dBal-gsas rngam-pa and then as the four *klu-mo* goddesses.
6) *Khrus* (ablutions).
7) Empowerments for long life.

The white Phu-wer *tshe-grub* ritual is prefaced by an account of its mythic origins in which Klu-grub ye-shes encounters *klu* who are intent on expelling him from their territory (paras i, ii). By meditating on the awe-inspiring form of the eighteen-headed dBal-gsas rngam-pa, he acquires the power to subjugate these malicious beings (paras iii, iv). In the description of dBal-gsas the five *rigs* (types) of *klu* are mentioned, which belong to the *rgyal* (kingly), *rje* (lordly), *bram-ze* (knowledge-holding), *rmangs* (commoner), and *rdol-pa* (inferior) classes. Once the realm of the *klu* is conquered, four beautiful *klu-mo* goddesses appear before Klu-grub ye-shes offering their praises and assistance (paras iv, v). It is the *klu-mo* of the east who presents him with the *tshe-grub* ritual:[66]

> (i) Prostrations to dBal-gsas rngam-pa, the *lha* of long life. The performance of the Life Master White Phu-wer has two main elements. The first is performed through the ingredients. The second is performed through the activities. Firstly, in ancient times, the son of Bram-ze thor-tsug mdzes, the one known as Klu-las grub-pa'i bon-po ye-shes snying-po, requested the transmission of the secret meaning of the mind[67] from Lha-bon yongs-su dag-pa.[68] He went to the great ocean realm. Among the realms, he went to the realm of Me-tog padma 'od (Resplendent Lotus Flower), erected his tent of aquatic silk, and stayed there while remaining fixed in the contemplation of the secret meaning of the mind.

[66] Nos. 378, ln. 1 to 381, ln. 3.

[67] Refers to an aspect of the highest Bon epistemological teachings known as rDzogs-chen.

[68] A disciple of gShen-rab's son Mu-cho ldem-drug and the teacher of the early *gshen* known as Mi-lus bsam-legs.

(ii) Once a sound without any physical basis appeared in the sky. Once, coming from the rocks appeared the sound of the drum and *gshang*. Once, coming from the shadows of a turquoise blue mountain, a voice said, "Klu-bon ye-shes snying-po you should not stay here, go away." Once, in the middle of the eighth night, while sleeping he dreamt about a white man who had a crown of seven snake-heads, riding on a white horse with a black mane. In his hand he held a snake lasso nine spans in length. Appearing with an extremely wrathful manner, he said, "Do not stay here." At that very moment, Klu-bon ye-shes snying-po suddenly got up and generated dauntless great wisdom.

(iii) He remained fixed on the form of dBal-gsas rngam-pa as having nine heads, eighteen arms and a white body color. The central [head] had a dark blue wrathful visage. His right white [head] had a dragon face. His left red [head] had a *chu-srin* face. His upper [heads] were those of *khyung* birds. On his head was tied white kingly type [*klu*]. His earrings were made of yellow lordly type [*klu*]. His necklace was made of red *bram-ze* (knowledge-holder/brahman) type [*klu*]. His armlets were made of green commoner type [*klu*]. His anklets were made of black striped inferior type [*klu*]. His *khyung* mouths consumed the savage *klu*. With the first pair of eighteen hands he fed white and black snakes into his mouths. In the eighth right hand he held the eight *khyung* of the eight divisions. In his eighth left hand there was a great fearful conflagration. His body was ornamented with the five types of *khyung*. Underfoot he trod over the eight great *klu*. All his body hairs were weapons. From his ears came thunder. From his nose came a cyclone. From his mouth came a fire. On his tongue was shooting lightning. The sound of his laughter was rageful.

(iv) [Ye-shes snying-po] visualized [dBal-gsas] like that. Then he uttered an incantation.[69] He recited 108 incantations and blew them onto a crystal egg. He threw it upon the ocean. Three times the ocean rose into the sky and three times it dried up. Thereafter, from inside the ocean, appeared a white crystal tent with one entrance. At the entrance there were four beautiful women. In unison the four beautiful women praised him. They praised him [saying], "You have a pacific mind, wrathful manner and fearful appearance. Your body is decorated with the five *khyung*. Under your feet you trod upon savage types of *klu*. You are the conqueror of all the haughty ones. We offer you our life-force hearts. Please befriend us in the manner of brothers and sisters. Please administer the oath of medicinal nectar to us." Thus they praised him in unison.

[69] In the text this is followed by three mantras.

(v) At that time, in the east, spoke dKar-mo 'od 'gyed ma, who offered him the performance of the Life Master White Phu-wer. Ser-mo thor-tsug ma (Yellow Female Hair Bun Woman) in the north offered him a wrathful and powerful *rgyud* (tantra). dBang-ldan dmar-mo (Powerful Red Female) in the west offered him a vase of power nectar. Rin-chen don-grub ma (Jewel Accomplishing Aims Woman) in the south offered him a vase. That is the chapter of the story.

Transliteration of the Ye shes snying po'i bkrol ba *text*

(i) dbal gsas rngam pa tshe'i lha la phyag 'tshal lo / tshe bdag phu wer dkar po'i sgrub pa 'di la don rnams (= rnam) pa 2* te / rdzas la brtan (= brten) te sgrub pa dang 1 / phrin las la brten sgrub pa dang 2 / dang po sngon dang po rtsa (= tsa) nas bram ze thor tsug mdzes kyi bu / klu las grub pa'i bon po ye shes snying po zhes bya ba des / lha bon yongs su dag pa la / gsang ba sems don gyi lung zhus nas / rgya mtsho chen po'i gling la byon / gling gi nang nas me tog padma 'od kyi gling la byon nas chu dar gyi gur phub nas bzhugs pa / gsang ba sems don gyi ting nge 'dzin la bzhugs pa'i dus su /

(ii) res shig nam mkha' stong pa'i khams nas gzugs med pa'i sgra 1 byung / res shig brag srib nas rnga dang gshang gi sgra sgrogs pa byung / res shig g.yu ri brag sngon gyi srib nas klu bon ye shes snying po khyed de ru ma sdod bzhud zer ba byung / res shig tshes brgyad kyi nam phyed tsam na / rnal gyi rmis (= rmi) lam la / mi dkar po sbrul mgo bdun gyi thor tsug yod pa 1 na re / rta dkar po rngog nag 1 la bcib / sbrul zhags dkar po 'dom dgu pa 1 lag na thogs / klu bon ye shes snying po 'di ru ma sdod zer nas shin tu khros shing tshig par byung ngo / de'i dus su klu bon ye shes snying po kag gis bzhengs nas / ye shes chen po'i nga rgyal bskyed de /

* Roman numerals are used to designate the Tibetan numerals found in the text.

(iii) sku dbal gsas rngam pa'i nga rgyal du bzhugs nas / dbu dgu phyag bco brgyad sku mdog dkar po ru yod pa / dkyil ni mthing kha khro bo'i zhal du yod pas (= pa) / g.yas pa dkar ba 'brug gi zhal du yod pa / g.yon pa dmar ba chu srin zhal du yod pa / steng gi dbu rnams khyung gi dbu ru yod pa / rgyal rigs dkar pos dbu la bcing ba / rje rigs ser po'i snyan cha byas pa / bram ze

dmar pos mgul chu byas pa / rmangs rigs ljang gus dpung rgyan byas pa / rdol pa nag khras zhabs la brgyan pa / gdug pa'i klu rnams khyung gi zhal du gsol ba / phyag bco brgyad kyi dang po 2 na / sbrul dkar nag 2 zhal du gsol ba / g.yas kyi phyag brgyad ni sde brgyad kyi khyung brgyad bsnams pa / g.yon gyi phyag brgyad na 'jigs pa'i me chen brgyad spor ba / khyung rigs lnga sku la brgyan pa / klu chen brgyad zhabs kyi 'og tu gzer ba / ba spu'i rang bzhin mtshon cha ru yod pa / snyan nas 'brug ldir shangs nas rlung 'tshub pa zhal nas me 'bar ba / ljags la glog 'gyu ba / gsung rngam pa'i bzhad sgra sgrogs pa /

(iv) de lta bu 1 bsgom (= bsgoms) nas / zhal nas sngags brjod pa / three mantras / shel sgong rdo la sngags brgya rtsa brgyad bzlas te / rgya mtsho'i steng du 'phangs pas / rgya mtsho yang lan 3 gnam du lhud lan 3 sa la skam mo / de'i rjes ma rgya mtsho'i nang nas shel gyi gur khang dkar po 1 byung nas gur la sgo 1 dod pa / sgo nas mdzes pa'i bud med bzhi yod pa / mdzes pa'i bud med bzhi po de yang mgrin 1 tu bstod pa / zhi ba'i ngang la drag po'i cha byad can byung ba 'jigs pa'i khyung lngas sku la brgyan pa / gdug pa'i klu rigs zhabs kyi 'og tu gzer ba / dregs pa ma lus 'dul la phyag 'tshal bstod / bdag cag rnams kyi srog snying khyed la 'bul / ming dang sring gi tshul du 'grogs par zhu / bdud rtsi sman gyi thugs dam bsre ru gsol / zhes gsol nas mgrin 1 tu bstod pa'o /

(v) de'i dus su shar phyogs kyi dkar mo 'od 'gyed mas zhal nas tshe bdag phu wer dkar po'i bsgrub pa phul / byang phyogs ser mo thor tsug mas drag po mthu rgyud phul / nub phyogs dbang ldan dmar mo'i (= mos) dbang dang bdud rtsi'i bum pa 'bul / lho phyogs rin chen don grub mas bum pa phul lo / de ni lo rgyus kyi le'u'o /

In the same volume of dBal-gsas rngam-pa rituals as the *Untied Performance of the Life Master White Phu-wer* is another text featuring the deity Master of Life White Phu-wer.[70] This untitled work is also attributed to the mythic Bon-po Klu-grub ye-shes and is therefore traditionally assigned to a very early period. Nevertheless, the tantric elements found in the text suggest that it is an example of the syncretistic melding of Indian and indigenous tradition. Written in prose, it contains an unusual collection of ritual practices, which lucidly and comprehensively address many of the maladies and problems facing human beings. The activities covered in the work include those for bringing and stopping rain (paras ii–vi), prevention of hail (para vii), protection from lightning (para viii), fertility and the well being of children (para ix), treatment of leprosy (paras x, xi), blockage of disease based on Bon tutelary deities and associated *khyung* (paras xii, xiii), elimination of nightmares (para xiv), and the suppression of diseases using effigies (para xv). As we have seen, these types of curative and rehabilitative functions are the object of the spirit-mediums' trance ceremonies (with the addition of divination) as well. However, instead of deity embodiment, the officiants in this Phu-wer ritual depend on mantras and meditation directed towards the tutelary gods.

In the text, Phu-wer is synonymous with dBal-gsas rngam-pa. Two other Bon tutelary deities are also incorporated in the performance: Lha-rgod of the speech and gTso-mchog of the mind.[71] As such, Phu-wer has no independent identity in the ritual nor is there reference to his Phya-gshen origin. In my opinion, the effacement of the Phu-wer lord of divination and his amalgamation to tantric tradition seems to represent a later Indian-inspired cultural innovation. The ritual practices of the text are mainly based on the recitation of mantras and spells, visualization of the tutelary deities and associated *khyung* deities, the administering of medicine, the use of figurines and effigies, and the wielding of the *phur-bu* (dagger). These therapeutic

[70] See New Collection of Bon *bka' brten*, vol. 229, nos. 361–376. The colophon reads: "Appertaining to the very essence of the deep instructions of coercion of Klu-grub ye-shes. Zhang-zhung Hris-pa [gyer-med] gave it to Khye'u dran-pa [nam-mkha']. This is a secret Bon transmission.* Keep it confidential.* This secret Bon has been transmitted from person to person.* *E ma ho*! This is the long life empowerment of swastika dBal-gsas. The manifestation of Bla-chen [dran-pa], [dPon-gsas] khyung-rgod [rtsal] (born 1175), discovered it at Zang-zang brag for living beings. 'Gro-mgon 'a-zha requested it from him. In the face of many hardships I, sDong phrug-shel, requested it from ['Gro-mgon]. May this composition, the root of virtue, defend and protect." (*klu sgrub ye shes snying po'i man ngag brnag pa yang snying gi skor / zhang zhung hris pas khye'u dran pa la gtad pa'o / gyer ro U ya*/ Ag tham*/ gyer ro nam mkha' seg sku rgyud lo* / E ma ho / dbal gsas g.yung drung tshe'i sgrub pa 'di / bla chen sprul pa dbyil ston khyung rgod kyis / zang zang brag nas 'gro ba'i don du bsnyed (= brnyed) / de la 'gro mgon 'a zhas zhus / de la sdong phrug shel bdag gi (= gis) ni / dka' ba spyad nas zhus pa'o / 'di bris dge ba'i rtsa bas mgon du skyabs su shog /*).

* This is a rough translation of these three esoteric lines.

[71] For a list of the five main Bon tutelary deities see Part Three, section i, p. 175 (fn. 8).

methods are also part of other types of religious practices including those conducted by the spirit-mediums. Notably, the *khyung* is an important curative deity for the *lha-pa* of Upper Tibet. Like some spirit-mediums, the text prescribes the pouring of milk into springs to make rain fall (paras iii, iv), one of many techniques listed for manipulating the weather. Hail can be a very destructive force in Tibet and its prevention is one of the objects of the text as it is in trance ceremonies.

The fostering of fertility and child survival is another preoccupation the text has in common with the priorities of the spirit-mediums (para ix). Of special ethno-medical interest is an accurate description of the physical symptoms associated with the onset of leprosy (para x), indicating that the author was well acquainted with the disease. In conjunction with the section on leprosy five orders of *klu* are mentioned (*klu-rigs lnga*), a popular system of classification for this class of spirit. The main agent of disease and drought in the text are the *klu*, who are controlled by the *khyung*, just as they are in the séance (paras xii–xv). This age-old theme of a celestial raptor dominating the subterranean water spirits is well represented in various ritual aspects of Tibetan culture and has been incorporated into Buddhist tradition as well:

(i) There are many ritual performance texts of this Master of Life White Phu-wer. The main texts [of dBal-gsas rngam-pa] have gone above. Here is shown the ritual performance text [of White Phu-wer]. Firstly, on the occasion of the ritual performance there is: 1) *dbab-pa* (precipitation), 2) *bcad-pa* (stoppage), 3) *zlog-pa* (expulsion), 4) *srung-ba* (protection), and 5) *gso-ba* (restoration). So, first is letting rain fall down. Stoppage is the halting of hail. Expulsion is the expelling of bad signs and omens. Protection is protecting the countryside. Restoration is the healing of diseases.

(ii) Firstly for letting rain fall: You yourselves continually intone the mantra of the *yi-dam* deity at a pure place. Then the method of letting rain fall is generally for any sorcery of the *klu*. The *khyung* [dominate] the four orders of *klu* and let rain fall. The incantations of the black *klu* are:[72] These are the express incantations of the *klu*. Now, the method of letting rain fall is to go near a west-facing spring and recite many incantations above it. Put the milk of a white goat with a black neck in the spring. Apply raw barley and toasted barley mixed together

[72] Several lines of spells are found in the text.

on your body. Give *gtor-ma*[73] to do the preliminary practice. Wear a blue dress and return home. Upon thunder coming from the west rain will fall in that direction. Also, the method to let rain fall is to go in the proximity of southeast-facing headwaters and recite as many of the above incantations as you can. Spread the milk of a light yellow cow on your body. Give many *chu-gtor* and return home. Upon thunder coming from the east rain will fall in two days.

(iii) Also, a method to let rain fall: go near the head of a south-facing spring and [give] many *chab-gtor*. Mix three types of parched barley mixed with three types of spring water and apply on your body. Place many *gtor-ma* before you. Recite the above incantations many times, give *gtor-ma*, give incense and return home. Upon thunder and lightning coming from the south rain will fall in three days. Another method to let rain fall is to go near the head of a northern aspect spring and make [offerings] of various sweets, milk, tufts of white wool, and *chu-gtor* in the spring. Face in the northern direction and make as many of the above incantations as you can. Make many *chu-gtor* and return home. Upon thundering it will rain from the north in one day. Consequently, it is impossible for rain not to come down. This above part of the text is the method for letting rain fall.

(iv) Collect the above and below [incantations] and bless a dagger. Confidently visualize yourself as the *yi-dam*. Very angrily wave the dagger and strike [near the spring]. Now, the method for freeing from the diseases of the *klu*. Catch snakes and frogs in a net and put into a spring. Wave the dagger and recite these incantations:[74] Recite these utterances and throw [the dagger] on the resting-place.[75] In this way heavy rain will come. Also, a system for inducing rain to fall is to make a figure of a snake from flour and reciting the above incantations, wave the dagger. Recite this incantation, too: *na ga nan hu lu kyi la rbad.* Thus saying, pour horse blood and milk into a spring and return home. If precipitation has been excessively induced there is a danger that hail will come. [If so], blow these incantations on the three sweets:[76] and pour into a spring. The methods of both the seductive and coercive *klu* [performances] are completed. Keep them secret. Keep them confidential.[77]

[73] This *gtor-ma* refers to *chu-gtor/chab-gtor*, a series of graduated basins in which water, dough figures and medicinal ingredients are put.
[74] Nine mantras are found in the text for black, white and brahman type *klu*.
[75] *gDan*. Literally means 'carpet'.
[76] Three incantations are given in the text.
[77] These last two lines of the paragraph represent the general meaning of *U ya Ag tham*.

(v) Now the method of stopping rain. Make the *phyagya* (hand signal) of heat and through concentration appear as the *yi-dam* deity. With this incantation and hand signal envision the clouds scattering: *Om bdza ta kyi ni tshinha tshinha hung phaṭ*. This is the incantation and hand signal to scatter clouds. Then to stop rain make a figure of a snake and frog with flour. Put them inside a covered vessel. Visualize yourself as a *bya-khyung*. With a bent index finger recite this incantation:[78] Saying like this visualize the *klu* being put inside the vessel. Cover with a bunch of white wool and keep [the lid] pressed down by resting a flat stone on it. The deep instructions of rain stoppage are completed.

(vi) Also, a method to let rain fall:[79] In five ceramic bowls [place] the *rlung gi rgyal-po* (five kings of the wind) riding deer. In their right hands they hold the banner of wind. In their left hands they hold the lasso of wind. The central [figure] is the blue wind of the firmament. The east [figure] is the yellow earth. The south [figure] is dark blue water. The west [figure] is red fire. The north [figure] is green wind. These figures are the same as [the central one] above. Suppress by blowing incantations of wind on wool of five different colors. These wind [incantations] scatter the clouds. These are the deep instructions for not letting rain fall and letting rain fall. Keep them secret. Keep them hidden.[80]

(vii) Now, protection from hail is to make an acacia dagger one finger in length[81] and 28 birch *byang-bu* (slips). Make four juniper daggers one finger in length. Write the mantra of dBal-gsas on the acacia dagger. Write the great Male-Female[82] on the four daggers. Write the mantras of the 28 *dbal-mo*[83] on the 28 slips. With the acacia dagger in the middle bind [the five daggers], interconnect the slips, and write the spell of scattering clouds, the mantra of the *dbal-mo* [*gze-ma*]. Write the spell of hail-conquering, the mantra of the *gyad-mo*. The *byin-te* expel harm and protect from hail. If still you cannot [stop the hail] strike by the mantras of the three epochs.[84] Strike with the expulsion *thun* (magic missile) incantation of the *lha-srin*. Visualize yourself as dBal-gsas rngam-pa. Visualize your right hand as the sky. Visualize your left hand as

[78] Incantation supplied in the text.
[79] Five incantations are presented in the text.
[80] These last two lines of the paragraph are represented by the textual line: *U ya tra seg*.
[81] *mDzub/'dzub* denotes a unit of linear measurement equivalent to the width of a finger.
[82] Chen-po yab yum. These are the four members of dBal-gsas rngam-pa's inner circle of deities: Khro-gsas, rNgam-gsas, dBal-gsas and gTum-gsas, along with their consorts.
[83] Manifestations of Srid-pa'i rgyal-mo subdivided into three groups of nine: *gze-ma*, *gyad-mo* and *byin-te*.
[84] *bsKal-gsum*. These mantras are related to the epoch ending elements of wind, fire and water.

the earth. Visualize that your body hairs in a state of agitation look like rain.[85] [Visualize] fire spewing from your mouth, smoke spreading from your nose, lightning discharging from your eyes, and thunder emanating from your ears. A blue *yam*[86] is coming out from the soles of your feet. Visualize the clouds scattering [like] dissipating smoke.[87] From the middle of your chest a fiery red *ram*[88] spreads out, becoming a fiery sword in the sky. Envision it melting [all] the hail. By reciting this,[89] the hail is conveyed to the corner like herded sheep. That is hail protection.

(viii) Now, to protect yourselves from thunderbolts write down the mantras of dBal-gsas in gold and silver on dark blue paper four fingers in length. These and relics and dragon bones are wrapped in five different [colored] cloths. Tie on your head. Undoubtedly it can [protect]. Or there is the protection of dBal-gsas according to the small text *dBal 'khor gsang ba'i thog rgyug*. [These are the two] dBal-gsas rngam-pa activities for thunderbolt and hail protection. We prostrate to dBal-gsas, the Life Master White Phu-wer.

(ix) [For] the protection and restoration of the *sri'u*[90] firstly, clear and secure the [ritual] borders. Write the mantra of dBal-gsas on an acacia dagger four fingers long and hang on the neck of the mother. Write down the Lha-rgod mantra on a *tshar-bu*[91] dagger and hang on the neck of the child. Undoubtedly, it can [protect]. In the event many [children] have previously died bind the mouth of the consuming *sri* with a circle[92] drawn according to the small chapter,[93] wrap in white silk and cover with porcupine skin, and hang on the child's clothes. Immediately after the birth of an infant mix *gu-gul*,[94] musk, *chu-dag*[95] and rock sugar. Blow the mantras of dBal-gsas and Lha-rgod on it 21 times and feed to him/her. It can [protect] from disease and harm. Do the main performance of dBal-gsas. After bombing the *sri* and their suppression through doing [other] wrathful practices, make a [celebratory] dance. Undoubtedly, it can [protect]. Keep secret. Keep confidential.

[85] In tantric practice body hair is visualized as weapons, which are used to repel harmful forces.
[86] *Yam* is the seed syllable of the wind element used in tantric rites of purification.
[87] This line is followed by a mantra.
[88] *Ram* is the seed syllable of the fire element used in tantric rites of purification.
[89] Mantra provided in text.
[90] The power or capability to give birth to and sustain children.
[91] A type of hard thorny wood.
[92] *'Khor-lo*. In this context, a talisman with mantras and the figure of a *khyung*.
[93] Reference to a dBal-gsas text.
[94] *Commiphora mukul*. An aromatic medicinal resin.
[95] *Acorus calamus*. In Tibetan medicine, there are four types used as a tonic, to remove pus, improve digestion, stop diarrhea, etc. (dGa' ba'i rdo-rje 1995: 299–301).

(x) Restoration is recovery from *mdze* (leprosy). Namely, diagnoses is first, protecting second, and reciting mantras is last; these three. The first element has general and specific diagnoses. The general [symptoms] are hot bodily sensations, radiating numbness, a shifting deadening [of body parts], quivering [skin], hardening of the flesh, skin lesions, striated skin, and skin changing hue many times. In the dreams there are frogs, tadpoles, snakes, small dogs, springs, temples, ruins, cows, and oxen. The specific [symptom] is that the kingly [*klu*] type starts from the head. The lordly [*klu*] type starts from the ears. The brahman [*klu*] type starts from the neck. The commoner [*klu*] type starts from the shoulders. The inferior [*klu*] type starts from the feet. The commoner sub-type of the kingly [*klu*] type enters the arms.

(xi) These are the general and specific restorations. In general read the *klu 'bum* text.[96] Make many *klu* offering rituals. At the onset of the external symptoms make many pacific offering rituals. Read the Bon canon and engage in charity. Make an effort to be virtuous. Avoid contamination [of the hearth and springs] and avoid anger. Specifically, for the kingly [*klu*] type do not stop offering *chu-gtor* in a respectful manner as if to a *yi-dam*. Undoubtedly, it can [restore]. Continually give *chu-gtor* to all the lordly [*klu*] type. Make an effort [to say] dBal-gsas mantras. Undoubtedly, it can [restore]. For the brahman [*klu*] type read sacred texts and save the lives of fish. Rescue life[97] and mold *tsha-tsha*.[98] Make an effort [to say] Lha-rgod mantras. This can [restore]. When offering to the commoner [*klu*] type think of them as your subjects.[99] Make an effort to meditate on gTso-mchog and [recite] his mantras. It shall [restore]. Like a thunderbolt, wrathfully block the inferior [*klu*] type.

(xii) Then, too, there are the orders of the *khyung*, the *khyung-rigs lnga* (five orders of *khyung*). Namely, these are called the angry dBal-gsas in the middle, Khyung-nag ral-can (Crested Black Khyung); the angry Lha-rgod in the east, Ka-ru-na; the angry gTso-mchog in the north, dBal-khyung me'i ral-can (Extremely Wrathful Khyung with the Fiery Crest); the angry character in the west, Khyung-dmar chu-srin ral-pa-can (Red Khyung with the Water Monster Crest); and the angry black *khyung* of the south who has wings of razor sharp swords. Repeat the

[96] This famous Bon textual cycle attributed to gShen-rab contains a large collection of *klu* lore and ritual.
[97] *Srog-bslu*. This refers to the custom of setting livestock free before they are slaughtered.
[98] *Tsha-tsha/tshwa-tshwa* are clay plaques or figurines with images of deities, *mchod-rten*, mantras, etc.
[99] This sentence is the general import of the incorrectly written line in the text: *rMangs rigs 'bang lta bur bskyed dar bu can nad bya'o.*

combined [mantras] of the dBal-gsas *khyung* performance of the five aforementioned types [of *khyung*]. Undoubtedly they can [block disease].

(xiii) Although the detailed instructions have precisely four elements and many systems of performance, there are three principal elements, [a fourth] to forcefully impel, and a fifth to depute the *khyung* and impel the *klu*; these five. The first of the three principal elements are the essential ingredients of protection [used when] bad signs arise in the mind and bad omens appear in the dreams. They are *klu-rtse*,[100] *klu-dug*,[101] *bong-nga*,[102] peacock feathers, porcupine quills, musk deer tusks, and the nose of a pig—having these things on the body will protect. When the first signs [of disease] arise, medicine is the principal matter. Purify the subtle channels and convey these [to the patient]: *bya-khyung*,[103] *rgya-tsha* (ammonium salt), *mtshal-dkar*,[104] *dong-rag*[105] *dong-kha*,[106] *shi-ri*,[107] *khahra*,[108] *ha-shig* (talcum), *nyi-rga*,[109] black and white *klu-dug*, and black and white *A-ka-ru*.[110] The diseases of the body cavity will [be expelled] as a watery stool. Regularly apply *klu-dug* externally. Mark points on the five *gnas*[111] with musk, *A-ru-ra*,[112] *klu-dug-pa*, and *bzang-drug*.[113] Hang a circle of dBal-khyung. Make an effort to recite mantras. Then make an effort [to say the mantras and visualize] Lha-rgod. Then make an effort [to say the mantras and visualize] gTso-mchog. After finishing [the mantras and visualizations] of the three gods say the mantra of the copper *khyung*. Undoubtedly, these can [block disease].

[100] A medicinal herb.
[101] The black variety of *klu-dug* is identified as *Corydalis conspera* (Pasang Yonten Arya 1998: 10).
[102] Comes in black and white (*Aconitum*), red (*Pedicularis trichoglossa*), and yellow (*Trollius ranunculoides*) varieties (dGa' ba'i rdo-rje 1995: 244–246).
[103] Perhaps a synonym for musk (*gla-rtsi*).
[104] A mineral good for putrefying wounds, eruptions, body odors, etc. (dGa' ba'i rdo-rje 1995: 75, 76).
[105] I have not been able to identify this herb.
[106] More often spelled: *dong-ga* (*Cassia fistula*). Used for liver and gall bladder disease, as an antidote for poisoning, for constipation, etc. See dGa' ba'i rdo-rje 1995 pp. 135, 136.
[107] *Rhus verniciflua*. A poisonous medicinal plant that causes wounds, blisters and swelling in most people (dGa' ba'i rdo-rje 1995: 158, 159).
[108] More commonly known as *khaṇḍa* (*Acacia catechu*). A wood indicated in coughing, diarrhea, pox, eruptions, to stimulate the appetite, etc. (dGa' ba'i rdo-rje 1995: 162, 163).
[109] Also called *Nyi-dga'/lcam-pa* (*Malva verticillata*) (dGa' ba'i rdo-rje 1995: 197, 198).
[110] Also spelled: *A-ga-ru* (Aquilaria).
[111] *gNas-lnga*. The five psycho-energetic centers of the body located in the middle of the forehead, neck, sternum, navel and genitals.
[112] *Terminalia Chebula*. A tonic beneficial in a wide range of ailments.
[113] The six superlative medicines: *cu-gang* (bamboo concretion), *gur-gum* (saffron), *dza-ti* (nutmeg), *sug-smel* (cardamom), *li-shi* (clove), *ka-ko-la* (*Amomum subulatum*).

(xiv) For very fierce types of provocations reciting dBal-gsas mantras is not sufficient, and for very bad nightmares alternatively recite [the mantras] of Lha-rgod and the black *khyung* in the daytime. At night assiduously recite only Lha-rgod [mantras]. This can [stop nightmares]. Sometimes recite the mantras of *zlog-thun sde-brgyad* (averting and expelling the eight orders of elemental spirits) 108 times. By these mantras separate the blighters from the allies.[114] [When] the dreams soften, slacken [the practice of mantras and visualizations]. [When] frogs and tadpoles appear being burnt or eaten [in dreams] this is a sign to slacken the practice. The primary element is the recitation of mantras.

(xv) To forcefully impel draw a *lingga* of the *klu*, summon the *klu* and put [in the *lingga*]. Do the visualization of the *khyung* accordingly. Apply musk, *klu dug-pa, bong-nge,* and urine to the *lingga* and press under the feet of the *khyung*. Recite many *khyung* mantras. This is the forceful [suppression]. The deputing of the *khyung* is clearly shown above. Everyday eulogize and depute dBal-gsas and gTso-mchog, and signal the five *khyung* for forceful [suppression]. This is among the long life empowerments of Master of Life White Phu-wer. These are the deep instructions for the healing of leprosy through the red life-force of the *klu*.

Transliteration of the untitled dBal gsas khyung nag *text*

(i) tshe bdag phu wer dkar po 'di la / gzhung dang las khrig mang ste / gzhung don gong du song / 'di (= dir) las khrig bsten (= bstan) / dang la las khrig kyi (= gi) dus la / dbab pa dang 1* / bcad pa dang 2 / zlog pa 3 / srung ba dang bzhi / gso ba dang lnga / de la dang po dbab pa ni / char pa dbab pa'o / bcad pa ni ser ba bcad pa'o / zlog pa ni than dang ltas ngan zlog pa'o / srung ba ni yul bsrung ba'o / gso ba ni bro nad gso ba'o /

* Roman numerals are used to designate the Tibetan numerals found in the text.

(ii) dang po char dbab pa ni / rang nyid gtsang ma'i gnas nyid du / yi dam lha bsnyen rgyun du bsreng (= bsring) / de ni dbab pas (= pa'i) thabs ni / spyir klu'i cho 'phrul gang la yang / klu bzhi bya khyung char dbab pa la / klu nag po'i sngags ni / * / de dag klu thams cad kyi snying po dngos bstan pa'o / da char pa dbab pa'i thabs ni chu mig nub tu bltas pa'i rtsar song la gong ma'i

[114] Six bracketed (*sbrul-shad*) lines, elaborating on the healing practices follow this line. They are not included in the translation.

snying po mang po bzlas la / ra dkar mo gnya' nag gi 'o ma dang / chu mig gi nang du nas yos bsres la rang gi lus la bku la / gtor ma gtong sngon 'gro la bya / gos sngon gon la khyim du 'ong / nub phyogs nas 'brug grags nas de'i phyogs su char 'bab / yang char pa dbab pa'i thabs ni / chu mgo bo lho shar bltas pa'i sngas su song la / gong ma'i sngags nus tshad bzlas la / ba ser skya yi 'o mas lus po byug la / chu gtor mang po btang la khyim du 'ong shar phyogs nas 'brug grags nas zhag gnyis nas char pa 'bab /

Mantras in text are designated: / * /

(iii) yang char bab (= dbab) thabs 1 la / chu mig mgo lho phyogs su bltas pa'i rtsar song la / chab gtor mang po gtong nas sna 3 bsres kyi shel tshig dang chu mig 3 gyi chu bsres la / lus la bku / gtor ma mang po sngon du bzhag la / sngags gong ltar bzlas la mang du byas gtor ma btong spos dud btang la khyim du 'ong / lhor 'brug 'od grags nas zhag gsum nas 'bab / yang dbab thabs gcig la / chu mig mgo byang du bstan pa'i rtsar song la / mngal (= mngar) sna tshogs 'o ma dang pal (= bal) 'dab dkar po dang / chu mig chu gtor bya / kha byang phyogs su bltas la / sngags gong ma nus tshad byas / chu gtor mang po bya la khyim du 'ong / 'brug grag nas zhag gcig nas byang nas char 'beb / de la char mi 'bab mi yung (= yong) mi srid do / de yan chad char dbab pa'i thabs so /

(iv) steng 'og gcig tu bsdus pas phur bu la byin rlabs byas / rang nyid yi dam gyi nga rgyal dang ldan par byas la / rab tu khros la phur 'dril la brdeg pa'o / da ni klu nad la bor ba'i thabs la / sbrul dang sbal pa'i rgya byas la chu mig nang du bcug la / phur bu dril zhing sngags 'di bzlas so / * / de skad ces bzlas la gdan la bor ro / de ltar byas la char drag tu 'ong / yang gnad la dbab pa'i lug (= lugs) gcig la / rjen phye la sbrul gyi gzugs byas la gong gi sngags bzlas shing phur bu dril la sngags 'di yang bzlas / * / zhes brjod la chu mig tu rta khrag dang 'o ma blug la khyim du 'ong / gnad la dbab drag na ser ba yang (= yongs) dogs yod pas mngar gsum la sngags 'di btab la chu la blug te (ste) / * / klu brid brdeg gnyis kyi thabs rdzogs so / U ya Ag tham /

(v) da ni char chad pa'i thabs la / tshad pa'i phyagya bca' la yi dam lhar gsal ba'i ting 'dzin gyis / tshad pa'i phyagya sprin gtor bar bsam / sngags 'di bzlas so / Om bdza ta kyi ni tshinha tshinha

hung phaṭ / de ni sprin gtor ba'i sngags dang phyagya 'o / de nas char pa bcad de rjen phye la sbrul gzugs byas la dang sbal pa'i gzugs byas la / bar bu'i nang du bcug la / bdag bya khyung du bsgom / mdzub mo bkug la sngags 'di bzlas / * / klu rnams bal (= par) bur bcug par bsam / bar (= bal) 'dab dkar pos kha bcad steng nas rdo leb kyis mnan bzhag go / char pa gcod pa'i man ngag rdzogs so /

(vi) yang char pa dbab pa'i thabs la / * / rdza'i kham bor lnga ru rlung gi rgyal po sha ba zhon pa lnga / g.yas pas rlung gis (= gi) ba dan bsnams pa / g.yon pas rlung zhags bsnams / dbus phyogs su nam mkha'i rlung sngon po / shar lho nub byed pa chu me rlung gi rlung ser sngo nag dmar ljang ngo / gzugs ni gong dang 'dra'o / bal tshon rnam pa lnga la rlung gi sngags btab la mnan no / 'di ni rlung sprin gtor char dbab tu mi ster pa dang / char pa dbab pa'i gdam ngag go / U ya tra seg /

(vii) da ni ser ba bsrung ba ni / seng ldeng gi phur pa mdzub gang ba gcig stag pa'i byang bu nyi shu rtsa brgyad pa 1 bya / shug pa'i phur pa 'dzub gang ba bzhi bya / seng ldeng phur pa la dbal gsas kyi sngags bris / phur pa bzhi po la chen po yab yum sngags bris / byang bu rtsa brgyad dbal mo rtsa brgyad sngags bris / seng lding (= ldeng) gi phur pa dkyil du bsdam / byang bu'i bar sbrel / dbal mo snying po sprin gtor ba'i sngags su bris / gyad mo'i snying po ser ba 'joms pa'i sngags su bris / byin te'i (= tes) gdon zlog ser ba srung bar byed / des kyang ma thub na / bskal 3 gyis sngags brdeg lha srin zlog thun rdeg / bdag dbal gsas rngam pa bsgom / lag pa g.yas pa gnam du bsgom / lag pa g.yon sa ru bsgom / ba spu'i rang bzhin char ltar 'khrugs par bsgom / zhal nas me bhar ba / shangs nas dud pa 'thor ba / spyan nas glog 'gyu ba / snyan nas 'brug ldir ba / bdag gi rkang pa'i mthil nas yi ge yam sngon po gcig chad nas song ba / sprin 'thor nas dud pa 'thol bar bsam / * / bdag gi thugs kha (= ka) nas ram me dmar po 1 'phros pas nam mkha' la me'i ral gri song nas / ser ba bzhus par bsam / de nas / * / zhes brjod pas ser ba ni zur la lug ded pa bzhin bskyon la gtong / de ni ser ba srung ba'o /

(viii) da ni rang la thog bsrung ba ni / mthing shog sor bzhi pa 1 la / dbal gsas kyi snying po gser dngul gyis bris la gdung sha ri ram dang / thog rus dang de rnams dar sna rnams (= rnam) pa

lnga la dril / rang gi mgo la btags na des thub (= par) the tshom med / yang na dbal gsas kyi thog bsrung dang dpal 'khor gsang ba'i thog rgyug des (= dpe) chung ltar ro / dbal gsas rngam pa'i las kha thog ser srung pa'o / dbal gsas tshe bdag phu wer dkar po la phyag 'tshal lo /

(ix) sri'u srung zhing gso ba ni dang po mtshams bcad / seng lding (= ldeng) gi phur sor bzhi pa 1 la / dbal gsas gyi (= kyi) snying po bris la ma'i mgul du btags tshar bu'i phur pa lha rgod snying po bris la bu yi mgul du btags / des thub pa the tshom med / gal te sngar mang du shi ba 1 yin na / sri gcan za kha bcing pa'i 'khor lo dpe chung ltar bris la dar dkar gyis sgril / zer mong gi pags pas btum la bu yi gos la btags / bu chung btsal ma thag tu gu gul dang gla rtsi chu dag ka ra bsres / dbal gsas lha rgod kyis sngags nyi shu rtsa 1 re btab la khong par btang / nad dang gdon yang thub bo / dbal gsas kyi gzhung bsrang la / sri la dzo rgyung dang drag shul bya / mnan zhing rjes shul bro brdung bya / the tshom med par thub bo / U ya Ag tham /

(x) gso ba ni mdze gso ba yin te / de yang dang po brtags pa ni bar du bsrung ba dang / tha mar bsnyen pa gsum mo / de la dang po brtags pa ni / spyi dang bye brag go / spyi ni lus la tsha wer dang khol bur sbrid pa dang / bem pa dang 'khyugs pa dang 'gul ba dang / sha 'phring pa dang / shu ba dang / sha bkra dang / sha mdog ltar 'gyur ba mang po dang / rmi lam du sbal lcang (= lcong) dang / sbrul dang khyi gu dang chu mig dang / lha khang dang khang rbul dang / ba glang rmis pa rnams so / bye brag ni mgo la zhugs na rgyal rigs yin / rna ba la zhugs na rjes (= rje) rigs / mgul la zhugs na bram ze yin / dpung pa la zhugs na rmang (= dmangs) rigs / rkang pa la zhugs na rdol (= gdol) ba yin / rgyal rigs kyi nang nas rmangs (= dmangs) rigs dpung la 'jug pa'o /

(xi) de dag srung gso spyi dang bye brag go / spyir klu 'bum gsung bsgrags / klu chog mang du bya / dang po phyi rtags 'byung na / zhi chog mang po bya / bka' bsgrags sbyin pa btang / dge ba la bskyed / thabs la 'dzems / mkhon (= 'khon) 'dzem mo / bye brag rgyal rigs chu gtor rgyun mi gcod yi dam gyis tshul du yar la mchod / des thub par the tshom med do / rjes (= rje) rigs ma lus chu gtor rgyun chad med par btang / dbal gsas snying po bskyed par bya des thub par the tshom med / bram ze'i rigs la gsung rab

dang nye 'don bya / srog bslu tsha tsha gdab / lha rgod snying po la bskyed / des thub bo / rmangs (= dmangs) rigs 'bang (= 'bangs) lta bur bskyed dar bu can nad bya'o / gtso mchog snying pos bskyed par bsgom des thub par 'gyur ro / rdol (= gdol) ba'i rigs drag pos thog ltar bcad /

(xii) de yang khyung rigs lngas bcad do / de yang khyung rigs lnga bya ba ni / dkyil du dbal gsas khros pa khyung nag ral chen / shar du lha rgod khros pa ka ru na / byang du gtso mchog khros pa dbal khyung me'i ral can / nub tu rang bzhin khros pa khyung dmar chu srin ral pa can / lho phyogs khyung nag khros pa spu gri'i gshog pa can / de ltar rig (= rigs) lnga'i dbal gsas khyung sgrub ltar sbrag nas drang / thub par the tshom med /

(xiii) gnad du bsnun pa'i man ngag bzhi dang bya lugs mang ste / 'di gnad 3 brnag pa gzer ba de bzhin / khyung bskul la klu rnams gzer ba dang lnga / dang po gnad 3 la / dang po bsrung rdzas kyi gnad ni / dang po 'byung gi dgongs pa'm / rmis ltas 'ong ba las (= la) / klu rtse klu dug pa sa bong nga rma bya'i mdangs gzugs lo (= mo) byi thur gla ba'i mche ba phag gi sna / de rnams lus la bcang na srung bar 'gyur ro / gtang sa thog sman nam gyi gnad ni / dang po rtags byung ba la / rtsa bshal bya khyung byung ba rgya tsha mtshal dkar dong rag dong kha shi ri / khahra ha shig nyi rga klu dug dkar nag A ka ru dkar nag de rnams gtong / khog pa'i nad rnams 'khru bar bya / rtags (= rtag) tu phyi nas klu dug pa byug / gnas lnga gla rtsi A ru ra dang / glu (= klu) dug pa bzang drug gi thig le bya / dbal khyung gi 'khor lo gdag / snying po la bskyed / de nas lha rgod la bskyed / de nas gtso mchog la bhaid / lha 3 la bsnyen tshar nas / zangs khyung sngags la drangs par bya / des thub pa the tshom med /

(xiv) gdan drag pos (= po'i) rigs la dbal gsas rkyang ba bsnyen pa rmi lam rtsub na nyin lha rgod bzlas / khyung nag sham bu btags la nyin bzlas / mtshan lha rgod la sham bur med par 'bad do / des thub bo / skabs sde brgyad zlog thun brgya rtsa brgyad / des ni sdong zla phral ba'o / mtshan la dbal gsas la bzlas / de nas khyung la bzlas / des thub par the tshom med / yang dbal gsas la bhaid la / dang po lha mi sgom / rmi lam rtsub na lha sgom / rmi lam 'jam nas klod (= glod) par bya / sbal lcong zos pa dang bsregs pa byung na rtags yin par klod (= glod) par chogs (= chog) / bzlas pa'i sngags kyi gnad do /

(xv) rnag pas gzir ba ni / klu'i lging (= lingga) bris la / klu bkug la bstim / khyung gi ting 'dzin ltar / gla ba dang klu dug pa dang bong nge'i dri chus byug la kling (= lingga) khyung gis (= gi) zhabs 'og tu mnan / khyung sngags mang du brjod / de nas gzer ba'o / khyung bskul ba ni gong du bstan pas dbal gsas gtso mchog gi bstod pa nyin re bskul gzer nas (= na) khyung lnga bskul ba bya'o / tshe bdag phur (= phu) wer dkar po'i tshe sgrub kyis gang (= nang) na / klu srog dmar pos mdze gso ba'i man ngag /

iii) *The Bon* sgra-bla *of existence*

The *sgra-bla* (literally; 'sound-soul') is a kind of protective deity or force. The *srid-pa'i sgra-bla* (*sgra-bla* of existence) are regarded in Bon tradition as warrior protectors with a rank far surpassing that of ordinary *sgra-bla* and other protectors such as mountain deities. It is commonly cited by Bon clerics that while the mountain gods came into being with our world, and meet their demise at its end, the *srid-pa'i sgra-bla* belong to the primal epoch—a time before there was existence. It is also believed that their personalities are not quite as checkered or dangerous as the mountain deities. Nevertheless, the ordinary Bon *sgra-bla* are tantamount to the Buddhist *dgra-lha*,[115] a form in which mountain deities often manifest.

As we have seen, the *srid-pa'i sgra-bla* are believed to have been employed by the ancient spirit-mediums of Bon. In this section, we will examine important textual material that demonstrates that, despite doctrinal distinctions, the *srid-pa'i sgra-bla* do in fact share many iconographic traits and functions with the mountain deities. The way in which these two classes of deities are propitiated also bears many similarities. In the Bon tradition, this close relationship is attributed to a common genealogical origin. As we shall see, this kinship between

[115] Variations in the spelling of this class of deities are discussed in Snellgrove 1967, p. 258 (fn. 20); Norbu 1995, pp. 60–62. The Bon *sgra-bla* are sometimes also rendered as *dgra-bla*. The *dgra-lha*, like the *yul-lha*, are mentioned in various Tunhuang manuscripts. For an enumeration of these sources see Stein 2003, p. 605. The Mongols have certain *tengri* (celestial) spirits, in the form of armed heroes on horseback, that correspond to the *dgra-lha*. Although the syncretism that has occurred between the two types of deities makes an analysis of their origins difficult, it could possibly indicate that concepts of the divine were common to both cultures in antiquity. See Heissig 1980, p. 84.

the mountain deities and *srid-pa'i sgra-bla* is proven by an all-inclusive theogony. Such linkages may reflect a historical continuity between the ancient spirit-mediumship of the *srid-pa'i sgra-bla* and that of the *lha-ri* (mountain deities) extant today. This raises a crucial question: were the *srid-pa'i sgra-bla* and *lha-ri* originally part of the same group of divinities, whose identities diverged to assume the deific character that is now prevalent? Although their involvement in spirit-mediumship and other sundry doctrinal affinities suggest an affirmative reply, this amounts to circumstantial evidence, and is not sufficient, in itself, to render a determination. Without the requisite historical and archaeological data we will have to put aside questions about the legendary spirit-mediumship of the pre-Imperial period and its links with the *lha-pa* who have practiced in Upper Tibet for centuries.

Like many of the mountain deities, the *srid-pa'i sgra-bla* are a class of martial deities who display the costumes and weapons of warriors. Moreover, their prime function is to fulfill the worldly concerns of those who petition them in the prescribed manner. The *srid-pa'i sgra-bla*, in exchange for offerings, are called upon to protect their worshippers from harm and to insure their well being. Their accessibility and helpfulness to votaries would seem to explain why they were supposed to have been used by spirit-mediums in early times.

The biographical *gZi brjid* shows how sTon-pa instructed his disciples in the manner in which the *sgra-bla* of existence are to be invoked. This *sgra-bla* ritual transmitted by sTon-pa for the protection of his followers is thought to belong to the very distant past. According to the legendary setting described in the 14th century *gZi brjid*, its transmission occurred even before the Zhang-zhung kingdom had been founded. While we cannot specifically date the *sgra-bla* ritual it is clear that it represents Bon religious material that predates the 14th century. According to the text, the impetus for revealing the invocations was a demonic attack on sTon-pa while he and his disciples were amusing themselves.

The *gZi brjid*[116] tells us that when sTon-pa and his young disciples were sporting in the forest, a terrible thunderous sound, hail

[116] *Dri med gzi brjid*, vol. 2, part 1 (*'dus pa rin po che'i rgyud dri ma med pa gzi brjid rab tu 'bar ba'i rgyud* (= *mdo*) *las rgyal bu gzhon*, pp. 1–177, Bod-ljongs bod yig dpe-rnying dpe-skrun khang, 2000), pp. 39–41. Significant portions of these passages have already been translated into English as has the section following them pertaining to the *smrang* (ritual narrative material) and *cho-rabs* (origin myth) of the original seven ancestors of the dMu clan. See Clemente 1994.

and lightening came from the sky. Animals in the vicinity fled in terror. Then, a terrific giant black demon with three eyes and fangs, riding a black dragon with conch horns and wings of fire, appeared in the sky. Holding a black crucible of molten pig-iron, the demon aimed its contents at sTon-pa's head. By raising his arm and making a wrathful protective sign with his hand (*sdig-mdzub*), sTon-pa forced the dragon to jerk his tail, causing the weapon to narrowly miss him and hit a lotus tree instead. All the youth with sTon-pa had become very afraid during this spectacle and some of them fainted. Soon the assembly was revived and deeply concerned about sTon-pa's safety, but he was more resplendent then ever. Through his great power he removed nine types of weapons and armor from the demon's crucible. Afterward, wearing a smile, he joked with his disciples: "Aren't you, the ones who are supposed to protect me, ashamed?"

The *gZi brjid* goes on to relate that, having warded off the attack, sTon-pa gshen-rab obtained the weapons and armor needed to invoke the *srid-pa'i sgra-bla* (para i).[117] As a prelude to these invocations incense and offering articles are presented to the deities (para ii). The omniscient *srid-pa'i sgra-bla* are then invoked from their domain, which transcends the dualistic bounds of ordinary phenomena (paras iii–vi). The three *sgra-bla* brothers are then invoked, relatives and leaders of the *wer-ma*, and the *bdud* and *btsan* (para vii). The next invocations are for the nine Dra-ma brothers and their armies, *sgra-bla* of warriors and invincible patrons of nine important types of weapons and armor (paras viii–xiii).[118] These spirit-warriors and their martial activities are described in the text with the type of Tibetan indigenous poetic verses we are familiar with from the liturgies for the mountain gods (para xi). Once the *sgra-bla* are present at the ritual venue they are given their requisite offerings (paras xii–xiv). This is followed by requests made to the deities (paras xv, xvi), a ritual sequence

[117] *Dri med gzi brjid*, vol. 2, part 1, pp. 41, ln. 15 to 46, ln. 16.

[118] In the historical context of local political power structures of the late 10th and 11th centuries, there is the tradition of nine royal heirlooms (*can-dgu*), which include armor and a sword, the weapons of conquest and territorial domination (Hazod 2000b). The *sgra-bla* of the sword, armor and other armaments of the *gZi brjid* ritual are also invoked to permit the officiants to aggressively prevail in all spheres of life.

of gifts for work that is also characteristic of mountain deity propitiation. In conclusion, the *srid-pa'i sgra-bla* appear in all their glory before gShen-rab and the others assembled (para xvii):

(i) Thereafter, [sTon-pa] uttered, "*bSwo Om ge du U dug snal zhi sale sale sangnge gsal swa ha.*"[119] Having said like this, he waved a leafy branch fan in the ten directions. All the unconscious animals of the forest became completely revived and were in fine health. Thereafter the Prince also said, "The demon boy who did this sorcery, even though he is very powerful and magical, could not harm me because I am comprised of the four activities.[120] Now, having taken the fortune[121] of the evil omens from the crucible of the nine brothers,[122] the beneficiary of this sorcery emerges as the nine types of weapons and armor of the *sgra-bla*. Now too, having invoked the *pha-myes kyi rgyud-gsas* (lineage of ancestral deities), I eulogize and petition them that there must be the seal of protection."[123]

(ii) Having said so, at the corner of a jeweled formation he continued, "Having cut *mkhan*,[124] juniper, *ba-lu*,[125] cane, bamboo, and the foliage of good wood, having burnt them in a bright fire, having purified by *phye-mar* and *'ol-skon* (liquid offerings), dairy products, sweets, meat, and blood, and having offered with *bdud-rtsi g.yu 'brang* (consecrated beer), I hold the nine types of weapons and armor of the *sgra-bla*. I am the son of the lineage of existence.[126] I am the scion of the lineage of existence. I am calling the gods that attend my lineage.

[119] A healing mantra used to revive the stricken animals of the forest. *Sangnge* is an esoteric word referring to purification.

[120] *'Phrin-las-bzhi*. These are the four types of activities (pacific, expanding, conquering and wrathful) that are the prerogative of deities.

[121] *g.Yang du blangs*. Refers to the transformation of something bad into something good.

[122] The nine constituents of the crucible.

[123] *Srung-btsug*. This is an ancient custom whereby the *sgra-bla* are invoked for protection. As a defensive sign, armor, weapons, the heads of the participants, and the right shoulder of males and the left shoulder of females were anointed with butter. An analogous contemporary custom is the dabbing of butter on milk-pails by shepherdesses to increase the yield.

[124] *mKhan-pa/'khan-pa* (*Artemisia*) is an aromatic plant that comes in white, red, gray and black varieties. It is used medicinally for swelling, bleeding and tumors among other conditions. See Pasang Yonten Arya 1998, pp. 24–26.

[125] *Ba-lu/dwa-lis* is a fragrant species of rhododendron used as incense. There are both white and black varieties. In medicine it is used as a remedy for edema, lung disorders, pain, and loss of appetite. See Pasang Yonten Arya 1998, pp. 96, 147.

[126] This line proclaims that the *sgra-bla* and sTon-pa (and by extension, the inhabitants of Tibet) belong to the same lineage.

(iii) From the margin[127] of the original primordium (*dang-po ye*) and existence (*yod*), the *sgra-bla* of the emptiness of both existence and non-existence[128] is Khyung-nag g.yu yi ral-pa can (Black Khyung with Crest of Turquoise), the lord conqueror of all existence. He resides, dwelling in the realm of non-existence. He beholds, seeing the realm of existence. He possesses, owning both existence and non-existence. Today, upon this divine foundation,[129] I call the *lha*, Black Crested Khyung.

(iv) Also, at the margin of light and darkness is mKha' lding[130] gser gyi spyan-mig (Sky-Soarer Golden Eyes), who pervades light and darkness everywhere without distinction. He resides, dwelling in the realm of darkness. He beholds, seeing the lamp of light.[131] He possesses, owning both light and darkness. Today, upon this divine foundation, I call the *lha*, Sky-Soarer Golden Eyes.

(v) Also, at the margin of the *ye*[132] and *ngam*,[133] the *sgra-bla* of both *ye* and *ngam* is Bya-khra lcags kyi mchu-sder can (Hawk with Beak and Claws of Iron), who inhabits the nest of Benediction Rock. He resides, dwelling in the realm of *ngam*. He looks, looking at the realm of *smon-pa*.[134] He possesses, owning both *ye* and *ngam*. Today, upon this divine foundation, I call the *lha*, Bya-khra g.yu-gshog (Hawk Turquoise wings).

(vi) Also, at the margin of *ye* and *smon* are the the *sgra-bla* of the miraculous *ye* and *smon*. On the right side of the golden mountain and turquoise valley is gSer-seng g.yu yi smin-ma can (Golden Lion with Eyebrows of Turquoise). On the left side of the conch mountain and agate valley is Dung-seng mchong gi ral-can (Conch Lion with Mane of Agate). Straight ahead at the crystal formation and glowing lake is Gangs-seng lcags kyi sder-mo can (Snow Lion with Claws of Iron). These three *sgra-bla* of the Phywa, dMu and gTsug[135] remain dwelling

[127] *So-mtshams* (margin/demarcation/border) is a Bon cosmological concept that bridges the dualistic realms of the universe. By originating from it, the *sgra-bla* preside over the opposing dimensions with no distinction. *So-mtshams* also symbolizes the monism of rDzogs-chen philosophy.

[128] *Yod* (existence) is the realm of light, goodness and virtue, while *med* (non-existence) is the realm of darkness, evil and nescience.

[129] *Lha-gzhi*. This denotes the place of the ritual. This could be a felt mat, altar or mandala.

[130] Epithet for the *khyung*, the horned eagle deity of Tibet.

[131] *sNang gi sgron*. Metaphor for the bright, virtuous side of existence.

[132] *Ye* is the white, upper realm of light, where the deities and people allied with sTon-pa reside.

[133] *Ngam* is the black, lower realm of darkness, where inauspicious demonic beings reside.

[134] Equivalent of *ye*.

[135] Three proto-tribes or lineages associated with Zhang-zhung, from which many clans are derived. Their order of mention corresponds with the order of the three lion *sgra-bla* in the text.

in the three countries of existence. They behold, seeing everywhere in the three realms.[136] They possess, owning the three worlds.[137] Today, upon this divine foundation, I call the *lha*, the three lion *sgra-bla*.

(vii) Also, at the frontier of the enemies and allies, the *sgra-bla* victorious in combat are Dom-mgo glang-snying (Black Bear Head Elephant Heart), the son of the *wer-ma*;[138] dPa' brtan ldog-med (Indomitable Repulsing Hero), the nephew of the *bdud*; and rNo-gcod gting 'byin (Sharp-Cutting Extricating From the Depths), the leader of the *btsan*. These are the three *sgra-bla ging*.[139] They reside, dwelling on top of Ri-rab. They guard, protecting the battle-line between the enemies and allies. They possess, owning the heart organ of the enemy. Today, upon this divine foundation, I call the *lha*, the three *sgra-bla* brothers.

(viii) Also, from the upper-most part of rGyug-chen bya-rdang is the wisdom army of *sgra-bla*, the nine *sgra-bla* of radiant men and beautiful horses. The *sgra-bla* of the helmet[140] is Dra-ma[141] lcags kyi bya-ru can (Hero Holder of the Iron Horns of the Bird). The *sgra-bla* of the blue *'bum-dbyel* (coat of mail) is Dra-ma li-phrom yang-sham can (Hero Holder of the Bronze Armor Skirt). The *sgra-bla* of the razor-sharp sword[142] is Dra-ma dbal gyi ngar-so can (Hero Holder of Razor Sharp Weapons of the dBal). The *sgra-bla* of the self-drawing bow is Dra-ma zhun-gar tsha-tsha can (Hero Holder of Sparking White Molten Steel).

(ix) The *sgra-bla* of the self-shooting arrow is Dra-ma dbal gyi mda' yu can (Hero Holder of the Pointed Arrow and Bow[143] of the dBal).

[136] *Khams-gsum* (three worlds/realms): *'dod-khams* (the realm of desire and sensuality inhabited by humans and other living beings), *gzugs-khams* (the realm of forms without sensuality or needs, primarily inhabited by the *lha*), and *gzugs-med-khams* (the formless realm, where only mind exists).

[137] *Jig-rten-gsum* (three worlds) corresponds with the following cosmological concepts: *khams-gsum*, *stong-gsum* (innumerable world systems) and the two types of *srid-pa-gsum* (three spheres of existence). One type of *srid-pa-gsum* is the vertically-arranged physical world of the ancient oral tradition: *sa-bla* (upper sphere), *sa-steng* (intermediate sphere) and *sa 'og* (subterranean sphere). The other type of *srid-pa-gsum* has a sophisticated doctrinal basis and consists of *rang-bzhin ye-srid kyi srid-pa* (inchoate existence), *byed-pos byas-pa'i srid-pa* (fabricated existence, the familiar material world that living beings inhabit), and *rgyu-mthun 'byung-pa'i srid-pa* (causal existence, activities that affect the future shape of existence).

[138] A class of warrior protective spirits closely related to the *sgra-bla*. For a ritual dedicated to the *wer-ma* found in the *gZi brjid*, see Norbu 1995, pp. 55–60; see, also, Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, p. 334; Snellgrove 1967, pp. 57–63.

[139] *Ging* in this context is the equivalent of *pho-nya* (messenger, attendant) and *las-mkhan* (worker).

[140] The Zhang-zhung word for helmet *zhog-zhun ke-ru* is used here.

[141] *Dra-ma* has the import of 'vanquishing hero', 'victorious one' and 'champion'.

[142] A Zhang-zhung word for sword is used: *ya-tsa*.

[143] *Yu*. This appears to be an alternative spelling for *zhu* (bow) that reflects the pronunciation of this word in the sTod dialect. The phonetic shift from *zha* to *ya* is most pronounced in the Ru-thog region.

The *sgra-bla* of the self-thrusting spear[144] is Dra-ma me yi ba-dan can (Hero Holder of the Fiery Banner). The *sgra-bla* of the self-surrounding shield is Dra-ma rlung gi zhol-sham can (Hero Holder of the Shield Fringe of Wind). The *sgra-bla* of the self-twirling lasso is Dra-ma glog gi myur-mgyog can (Hero Possessor of Lightening Speed). The *sgra-bla* of the self-hooking battle-ax is Dra-ma 'phrul gyi sha-zung can (Hero Holder of the Magical Hook). These are the nine Dra-ma brothers of the *sgra-bla*.

(x) From the birth of primordial existence until the present day the wind could not strip away [the weapons] of the Dra-ma. They are the *sgra-bla* of the undamaged razor-sharp [weapons]. They reside, dwelling in the armory. They stay, reposing on the peak of the *dmu* mountain. They protect, fond of Bon, they are protecting. They help, venerating the *gshen*, they are aiding. They escort, accomplishing for the oath-holders. They assist, accomplishing for the vow-holders. They despise, hating the enemies who hate us. They fulminate, raging against the noxious obstructive forces.

(xi) The army of 990,000 *sgra-bla* have arms, armor and military accouterments *si li li*.[145] On racehorses they shoot arrows *sha ra ra*.[146] They swing their swords and thrust their spears *ljibs se ljib*.[147] They have white and red banners *phya ra ra*.[148] They have blue and red regimental flags *pu ru ru*.[149] They draw in their battle-axes and lassos *wangs se wang*.[150] They have shields with large central discs *go ro ro*.[151] They have [battle cries] *ku-sgra and bswo-sgra di ri ri*.[152] They have many armies *nyi li li*.[153] The heroes are gathering and maneuvering[154] *sga ra*

[144] The self-thrusting spear (*mdung rang 'debs*) can be traced to the Tun-huang manuscript *Pelliot 250*. Called *lha'i dkor* (equipment of the *lha*), *Pelliot 250* (para IIId) also mentions the self-cutting sword, self-dressing armor and self-deflecting shield as implements of great magical power granted by King Dri-gum btsan-po to his assassin Lo-ngam rta-rdzi (Haarh 1969: 401, 402). In *mKhas pa lde'u* (p. 235) mention is also made of the self-thrusting spear and similar magical articles that were given to the King gNya' khri before he descended to earth.

[145] *Si li li* conveys a clanging sound.

[146] *Sha ra ra* depicts that the arrows are flying directly towards their targets.

[147] *Ljibs se ljib* depicts the flailing and striking motion of the two weapons.

[148] *Phya ra ra* shows that the banners are fluttering in the wind.

[149] *Pu ru ru* conveys that the flags are making a rippling motion.

[150] *Wangs se wang* conveys the action of the weapons being retracted by the user.

[151] *Go ro ro* depicts a spinning motion.

[152] *Di ri ri* is the onomatopoeia for very distinctive and sharp sounds, not unlike thunder.

[153] *Nyi li li* conveys a teeming army that is rapidly assembling, resembling heavy snowfall.

[154] This maneuvering takes the form of a military jig.

ra.[155] The fighters are charging *brengs se breng.*[156] They brandish molten metal bombs, hail and bright lightning *kams se kam.*[157] There are white [hot] molten metal sparks *tha ra ra.*[158] There is epochal thunder *'u ru ru.*[159] There is a tempest of the elements[160] *tshubs se tshub.*[161]

(xii) Today upon this divine foundation, I[162] call the gods, the nine Dra-ma bothers. *Kye*! I offer to and praise the very great *sgra-bla*. From ancient times you have been offered to and praised. Presently, I am offering to and attending the *lha* of the lineage of existence, do not stray from me. I am raising you up in homage, do not begrudge me. I am calling forth, do not pretend that you cannot hear me. I am signaling and striding towards you, do not pretend that you cannot see me.

(xiii) I make offerings to you. I offer with the first part of the *dkar-gsum* (three white foods) and other dairy products. I offer with the *dmar-gsum* (three red foods)[163] and other fresh organs. I offer with the *mngar-gsum* (three sweets) and other sweets. I offer beer[164] made from the juice of the nine grains.[165] I offer a very sharp three-pointed *bshos-bu*. I offer with yaks, sheep and goats.[166] I offer with deer, onagers, antelopes, and gazelles for riding. I offer with tigers, leopards, black

[155] *sGa ra ra* depicts the vibrant movement of the combatant *sgra-bla*.
[156] *Brengs se breng* conveys the action of running very quickly.
[157] *Kams se kam* depicts the zigzagging, forceful path of the weapons, which resembles a lightning strike.
[158] *Tha ra ra* portrays the scattering of the sparks in all directions.
[159] *'U ru ru* conveys a thunderous sound or very loud report.
[160] This refers to a blizzard (water), a sandstorm (earth), a conflagration (fire), and a hurricane (air).
[161] *Tshubs se tshub* conveys the action of dust, which is highly pervasive.
[162] This series of offerings could also be read in the third person, as befits a collective ritual.
[163] Blood, meat and bone.
[164] The Zhang-zhung word *yu-tis* is used.
[165] The *'bru-sna-dgu* includes *nas* (barley), *'bras* (rice), *so-ba* (thick-hulled barley), *sran-chung* (lentils), *skye-tshe* (*Roripa indica*), *gro* (wheat), *nyung-dkar* (white mustard), *khre* (millet), and *til* (sesame). See *gSar bu'i blo gros bskyed byed 'phrul gyi lde mig ces bya ba bzhugs pa'i dbu phyogs legs sho*, nos. 689–718, written by gShen mkhas-grub (also known as Tshul-khrims rgyal-mtshan and by his Sanskrit name (although it is thought to be a Zhang-zhung name) Shri-la dhwa-dza, born 1783), nos. 692, lns. 1–2. This text is found in a volume of general instructions for conducting Bon rituals entitled *Nyer mkho 'dod 'jo 'khri shing*. The text informs us that this list of nine grains was taken from an earlier source, mKhan-po rgyal-ba 'od-zer's *sNgon 'gro spyi rgyug nor bu'i 'phreng ba*.
[166] It is thought that originally the ritual was conducted with live animals. They were given in the same manner as *'brog-pa* families do for their personal deities, where they are permitted to roam freely for the duration of their lives. Nowadays this *sgra-bla* ritual is usually carried out with dough effigies, etc.

bears, and brown bears as escorts. I offer with lynx [skin], wolf [skin] and silk vestments. I offer with *mkhan*, juniper, *ba-lu*, and flowers [incense]. I offer with whatever is your preference, the ingredients of the oath and support.[167]

(xiv) Mighty *sgra-bla* do not be ambivalent [towards me]. Mighty *sgra-bla* do not be malevolent [towards me]. Mighty *sgra-bla* do not defile [me]. Mighty *sgra-bla* do not pollute [me]. If you are contrary, I will straighten you with a support of white cane. If you are malevolent, I will win you over with *gtor-ma* and whatever else you prefer. If defiled, I will purify you with *tshan*[168] and incense. If polluted, I will wash you in pure ablutions. If thirsty, I will offer you consecrated beer. If hungry, I will offer you the warm hearts of the enemy to eat.

(xv) I erect the support of nine types of armor and armaments. Mighty *sgra-bla* stay in this support. Stay around this helmet. Stay around this coat of mail. Stay around this razor-sharp sword. Stay around this self-drawing bow. Stay around this self-shooting arrow. Stay around this self-thrusting spear. Stay around this self-surrounding shield. Stay around this self-retrieving lasso. Stay around this self-hooking battle-ax.

(xvi) I, the Bon-po of the lineage of existence, call upon the deities that have been offered to by my lineage. Mighty *sgra-bla* don't do small favors.[169] When I am in residence shore up my fortune.[170] When traveling, may I be accompanied by a gathering of heroes. During the daytime keep watch. During the nighttime let a lamp illuminate. If I am traveling abroad carry out my wishes. If I am crossing bad roads defend me from terror. If I send you to the enemy destroy them. If there is a dispute let me triumph. When authority is exerted in the kingdom guard the royal law. When the [Bon] doctrine is spread give assistance. *Ku bswo che'o lha rgyal lo*![171] Thus spoke [sTon-pa].

(xvii) After the smoke of good wood dissipated in the sky, from swirling clouds and rainbows, all the armies of the *sgra-bla* of primordial knowledge with their arms, armor and military accouterments came before the Prince.

[167] The place where the *sgra-bla* congregate during the ritual. This could be a bundle of weapons or a *gsas-mkhar*-type shrine.
[168] *Tshan* are liquids including substances such as pure water, milk and blood used in ablutions. See Part Five, section vi.
[169] In other words, provide substantial assistance.
[170] *rMa-g.yang* is generally the same as *g.yang*, the capability for good fortune and auspiciousness.
[171] Triumphant invocation for the *sgra-bla*, mountain gods and the various personal deities.

I will now detail the icongraphic and functional parallels between the *srid-pa'i sgra-bla* of the *gZi brjid* ritual and the *lha-ri* (mountain gods) and other *yul-lha*. There are also semantic affinities in the offering regime of the respective ritual texts. Individually, many of these similarities can be attributed to the common tradition of Tibetan protective deities (*srung 'khor*), but taken as a whole they point to a close relationship between the *srid-pa'i sgra-bla* and *yul-lha*. This is particularly true when both groups serve as ancestral gods (*mes kyi lha/srid-pa'i lha*). Before the *gZi brjid* ritual begins, sTon-pa proclaims the *sgra-bla* ancestral protective deities (para i). Likewise, the *yul-lha* are ancestral protective deities—as typified by the kinship appellations often applied to them, such as *A-myes/spo-spo/mes-po* (grandfather), *A-phyi/I-pi/A-pi/A-ye* (grandmother) *mes/myes* (ancestor), *jo-bo* (elder brother), *jo-mo* (elder sister), and *pho-lha* (father spirit).[172]

In order to conduct the invocation ritual to the *srid-pa'i sgra-bla*, sTon-pa assembles the requisite offerings (incense, dairy products, meat, blood, beer, etc.). While these are standard objects offered to many classes of *srung-ma* (protective deities), the selection of offerings is most appropriate for those deities who exhibit both good and bad tendencies towards human beings, such as the various mountain and lake divinities. The *srid-pa'i sgra-bla* assume the form of *khyung* and hawks (para ii), predatory birds that the *lha-ri* also frequently manifest as.[173] The *srid-pa'i sgra-bla* are attributed with the defense of three important tribes or proto-clans of Tibet, the Phywa, dMu and gTsug (para vi). Similarly, the *lha-ri* are also assigned the status of tribal and proto-clan protectors, but their ultimate ancestors are the Phywa.[174] This is allegorical evidence to show that the *srid-pa'i sgra-bla* occupy a more fundamental cosmogonic position then the *lha-ri*.

[172] These appellations are reminiscent of the genealogical relationship between people and mountain deities in the ancient cosmogonies. For example, in the origin myths of early kings and mountain deities they are linked in a parental relationship (cf. Karmay 1996: 61). The ancestral relationship between the Tibetans and gNyan-chen thang-lha is discussed in Bellezza 1997, pp. 44–48; 2001, pp. 76–78; Part Three, section i.

[173] gNyan-chen thang-lha commonly manifests as a *khyung*, a hawk or a falcon. See para i in the *Phur-pa stod-cha* text, p. 179 For Buddhist textual references see Bellezza 1997, p. 58.

[174] The *dBu nag mi'u 'dra chags*, a text preserving an indigenous origin myth, records that the mountain deities and human beings both arose from the Phywa race (Karmay 1998: 250, 251, 266).

This crucial difference between the two classes of deities is used in Bon to theologically demonstrate that the *srid-pa'i sgra-bla* are a superior group. However, there are still many other links tying them closely together. The *sgra-bla* rNo-gcod is called the leader of the *btsan* (*btsan gyi dpon*) (para vii), while rTa-rgo ngo-dmar lha-btsan is known as the *btsan* king (*btsan rje rgyal po*) (see Part Three, section iii, p. 235). Likewise, Nam-ra is repeatedly called the king of the *btsan* (*btsan gyi rgyal-po*) (see Part Three, section v, pp. 266–272), a common appellation for other important mountain gods as well. Thus the noteworthy role of presiding over the terrestrial *btsan* spirits is assigned to both the *srid-pa'i sgra-bla* and the mountain gods.

In the *gZi brjid* ritual the three *sgra-bla* brothers known as *ging* are said to reside on the world mountain Ri-rab (para vii) and the Dra-ma brothers on the mountain of the *dmu* (para x). While these are understood to be metaphorical attributions relating to the exalted nature of the *sgra-bla*, they nevertheless, find strong resonance in the cult of mountain deities. It is after all commonplace to refer to mountain gods as *sgra-bla/dgra-lha*. In Bon tradition, the *sgra-bla* of mountains have a lower status than the *srid-pa'i sgra-bla*. In the *rTa dang gnyis kyi bskang ba* we have already seen how rTa-rgo was called the *sgra-bla* of gold miners, as well as being generally equated with this class of deities. gNyan-chen thang-lha is also popularly called a *dgra-lha*, as is Gangs-ri lha-btsan, Nam-ra, Rol-pa skya-bdun, etc.

The martial appearance of the Dra-ma *sgra-bla*—mounted on horses, brandishing weapons and regimental banners (paras vii–x)—is classic imagery, used in literary sources and the oral tradition to describe the *lha-ri* and their circle of *btsan*, *gnyan* and other deities. The choice of trisyllabic indicators to vividly portray these warrior deities and provide stress in the verses (para xi) are indigenous literary devices common to both the *sgra-bla* and *yul-lha* texts. These commonalties in literary style extend beyond prosody to the language used to petition the deities, and includes analagous exhortations and admonishments (para xii). Unlike the more worldly deities, the *srid-pa'i sgra-bla* do not have to be reminded of their oath to uphold the Bon doctrines. However, in the *gZi brjid* ritual their attention is demanded in much the same way, as found in texts dedicated to the *yul-lha* (para xii).

The specific choice of animals in the *gZi brjid* ritual is also telling. In addition to everyday livestock, we find mention of deer, onagers, antelope and gazelles (para xiii), animals indigenous to Upper Tibet,

and ones frequently gifted to the *yul-lha* of the region. Regarding the use of these offerings, it is popularly cited that the *lha-ri* and other *yul-lha* manifest as wild ungulates, as well as having these animals under their custodial care. The *gZi brjid* also makes specific mention of tigers, leopards, black bears and brown bears being offered to the *srid-pa'i sgra-bla* (para xiii), precisely the kinds of animals that feature in texts to other members of the indigenous pantheon.

The choice of ritual language underscores the interrelationship between the environment-bound deities and *srid-pa'i sgra-bla*. Like the mountain deities, the *srid-pa'i sgra-bla* must be asked not to harm the officiants of the ritual (para xiv). This ambivalence imbues the *srid-pa'i sgra-bla* with the type of personality characteristic of mountain gods, not one that would appear to be inherently superior. It must also be noted that the *rten* (support) for the *sgra-bla* used in the *gZi brjid* ritual is comprised of arms and armor (paras xv, xvi), exactly the kinds of support used by the *lha-ri*. Moreover, the requests made to the *sgra-bla* for protection (para xvi) are similar to those addressed to the *lha-ri*. For example, we have seen how both the *srid-pa'i sgra-bla* and *yul-lha* serve as travel gods (*lam-lha*). In conclusion, these far-ranging links between the *yul-lha* and *srid-pa'i sgra-bla* seem to be indicative of a shared historical theogony. Nevertheless, it is not at all certain how and when Bon doctrinal distinctions between the two classes of deities arose.

Transliteration of gZi brjid *extract*

(i) de nas yang zhal nas / bswo Om ge du U dug snal zhi sale sale sangnge gsal swa ha / ces gsungs pas / shing lo'i g.yab mo'i (= mos) phyogs bcur g.yab pas / nags tshal gyi sems can rgyal (= brgyal) ba thams cad kyang / rab tu sangs nas khams bde bar 'gyur (= gyur) ro / de nas yang rgyal bus gsungs pa / da ci bdud kyi bu yis cho 'phrul zhig byung ba / kho yang stobs dang rdzu 'phrul che ba zhig 'dug ste / nga yang phrin las rnam bzhi las grub pa zhig yin pas / khos kyang ma tshugs / da ni thog smad spun dgu de / than ngan g.yang du blangs nas / cho 'phrul gyi grogs su shar bas / sgra bla'i go mtshon sna dgu de byung bas / da yang pha myes kyi rgyud gsas bdar zhing / mnga' gsol ba dang srung btsug dgos . . .

(ii) . . . gsungs nas / rin po che'i brag zur la / mkhan shug dang / ba lu dang ba (= sba) snyug (= smyug) dang / bzang shing gi lo ma brag ste / snang ba'i me la bsregs nas / phye mar 'ol skon dang / dkar mngar sha khrag gis sangs (= bsang) nas / bdud rtsi g.yu 'brang gis mchod cing / sgra bla'i go mtshon sna dgu bsnams nas gsungs pa / bswo nga ni srid pa rgyud kyi bu / srid pa rgyud kyi bu pho yin / rigs su mchod pa'i lha bdar nas /

(iii) dang po ye dang yod kyi so mtshams nas / stong yod med gnyis kyi sgra bla ste / khyung nag g.yu yi ral pa can / zil gnon srid pa kun gyi rje / bzhugs ni med kyi yul na bzhugs / gzigs ni yod kyi yul na gzigs / bdag ni yod med gnyis kar bdag / de ring lha gzhi'i gong 'di ru / khyung nag ral chen lha ru bdar /

(iv) yang mun dang snang gi so mtshams na / snang mun gnyis kyi sgra bla de / mkha' lding gser gyi spyan mig can / mun snang med par yongs la khyab / bzhugs ni mun gyi yul na bzhugs / gzigs ni snang gi 'bron (= sgron) la gzigs / bdag ni snang mun gnyis ka bdag / de ring lha gzhi'i gong 'di ru / mkha' lding gser mig lha ru bdar /

(v) yang ye dang ngam gyi so mtshams na / ye ngam gnyis kyi sgra bla de / bya khra lcags kyi mchu sder can / smon lam brag gi tshang la khra (= 'khra) / bzhugs ni ngam ni (= gyi) yul na bzhugs / lta ni smon pa'i yul la lta / bdag ni ye ngam gnyis ka bdag / de ring lha gzhi'i gong 'di ru / bya khra g.yu gshog lha ru bdar /

(vi) yang ye dang smon pa'i so mtshams nas / ye smon 'phrul gyi sgra bla de / g.yas kyi gser ri g.yu lung nas / gser seng g.yu yi smin ma can / g.yon gyi dung ri mchong lung na (= nas) / dung seng mchong gi ral pa can / thad kyi shel brag 'od mtsho nas / gangs seng lcags kyi sder mo can / phya (= phywa) dmu gtsug gi sgra bla de / bzhugs ni yod lung gsum na bzhugs / gzigs ni khams gsum yongs la gzigs / bdag ni 'jig rten gsum po bdag / de ring lha gzhi'i gong 'di ru / sgra bla seng gsum lha ru bdar /

(vii) yang dgra dang zun gyi so mtshams nas / g.yul so rgyal ba'i sgra bla de / dom mgo glang [snying] wer ma'i sras / dpa' brtan ldog med bdud kyi tsha / rno gcod gting 'byin btsan gyi dpon / sgra bla mched gsum dpa' ba'i ging / bzhugs ni ri rab rtse la bzhugs / srung ni dgra zun g.yul so srung / bdag ni dgra bo'i don snying bdag / de ring lha gzhi'i gong 'di ru / sgra bla mched gsum lha ru bdar /

(viii) yang rgyug chen bya rdang gong ma nas / shes che'i dmag gi sgra bla de / sgra bla mi bkra rta bkra dgu / zhog zhun ke ru'i sgra bla de / dra ma lcags kyi bya ru can / 'bud (= 'bum) dbyel sngon mo'i sgra bla de / dra ma li (= le) phrom yang sham can / ya tsa dbal gyi sgra bla de / dra ma dbal gyi ngar so can / gzhu mo rang bdungs sgra bla de / dra ma zhu (= zhun) gar tsha tsha can /

(ix) mda' mo rang 'phen sgra bla de / dra ma dbal gyi mda' yu can / mdung mo rang 'debs sgra bla de / dra ma me yi ba dan can / phub mo rang 'khor sgra bla de / dra ma rlung gi zhol lcam (= sham) can / zhags pa rang skyil sgra bla de / dra ma glog gi myur mgyog can / lcags kyu rang 'dzin sgra bla de / dra ma 'phrul gyi sha zung can / de sgra bla dra ma mched dgu yin /

(x) sngon srid pa chags pa phyin cad nas / de ring nyi ma phan chad du / dra ma rlung gi (= gis) bshud ma myong / dbal so ma nyams pa'i sgra bla yin / bzhugs ni mtshon cha'i mkhar la bzhugs gnas ni dmu ri'i rtse la gnas / mgon ni bon la dga' bas mgon / skyobs ni gshen la gdung bas skyobs / sdong ni dam tshig can la mdzad / grogs ni tha tshig can la byed / sdang ni sdang ba'i dgra la sdang / 'tshig ni gnod pa'i bgegs la 'tshig /

(xi) dgu khri dgu 'bum dgra bla'i dmag / go cha rgyan cha si li li / rta rgyug mda' 'phen sha ra ra / ya tsa mdung 'debs ljib (= ljibs) se ljib / ba dan dkar dmar phya ra ra / ru mtshon sngon dmar pu ru ru / lcags kyu zhags bsdog wang (= wangs) se wang / phub mo gling chen go ro ro / ku sgra bswo sgra di ri ri / dmag tshogs dpung dang nyi li li / dpa' 'dus 'tshom dang sga ra ra / las mkhan rgyug dang breng (= brengs) se breng / thog ser glog 'od kam (= kams) se kam / zhun dkar tsha tsha tha ra ra / skol pa'i 'brug sgra 'u ru ru / 'byung ba'i bu yug tshub (= tshubs) se tshub /

(xii) de ring lha gzhi'i gong 'di ru / dra ma mched dgu lha ru bdar / kye mchod do bstod do sgra bla gnyen (= gnyan) / sngon kyang mchod mchod bstod bstod pa / da lta srid pa rgyud kyi lha / mchod cing bsten la rgyang ma ring / bkyag cing bkur na 'phra (= phrag) ma dog / bos shing sgrogs na snyan ma sras (= sra) / g.yab cing 'dor na spyon ma rtul (= btul) /

(xiii) khyed la mchod pa 'bul ba ni / dkar gsum dkar kyi phud kyis mchod / dmar gsum dmar gyi don gyis mchod / mngar gsum mngar gyi rtsi yis mchod / 'bru dgu bcud kyi yu tis mchod / rtse gsum dbal gyi bshos bus mchod / g.yag lug ra gsum bya yis mchod / sha skyang (= rkyang) gtsod dgo chibs kyis mchod / stag gzig dom dred rol gyis mchod / dbyi spyang dar zab rgyan gyis mchod / mkhan shug ba lu rtsi yis mchod / rang mthun dam rdzas rten gyi (= gyis) mchod /

(xiv) sgra bla gnyan po ma yo cig / sgra bla gnyan po ma mthur cig / sgra bla gnyan po ma sme zhig / sgra bla gnyan po ma mnol cig / yo ba sba dkar brten gyis bsrang / mthur na rang mthun gtor mas mngan / sme na tshan dang spos kyis sangs (= bsang) / mnol na gtsang ma khrus kyis krus (= bkru) / skyem na bdud rtsi chang gis mchod / bkres na dgra snying dron mo gsol /

(xv) go cha sna dgu rten du 'dzugs / sgra bla gnyan po rten du bzhugs / zhog zhun ke ru 'di la 'khor / 'bud (= 'bum) dbyel sngon mo 'di la 'khor / ya tsa rno dbal 'di la 'khor / gzhu mo rang brdung 'di la 'khor / mda' mo rang 'phen 'di la 'khor / mdung mo rang 'debs 'di la 'khor / phub mo rang 'khyil 'di la 'khor / zhags pa rang sdog 'di la 'khor / lcags kyu rang 'dzin 'di la 'khor /

(xvi) nga srid pa rgyud kyi bon po yis / rigs su mchod ba'i lha bdar na / sgra bla gnyan po drin ma chung / gzhi'i dus su rma g.yang bskyil / byes kyi dus su dpa' khyom (= khrom) khyog nyin gyi dus su bya ra tshugs / mtshan gyi dus su sgron me khyog shul ring bsgrod na bsam pa sgrubs / lam ngan brgal na 'jigs pa skyabs / dgra la sbad na yo ling thob / shag kha 'debs na rgyal kha zung / rgyal sa gnon na rgyal khrims skyongs / bstan pa spel na sdong grogs mdzod / ku bswo che'o lha rgyal lo /

(xvii) zhes gsungs pas / bzang shing dud pa nam mkha' la song ba las / gzha' sprin gtib pa'i nang nas / ye mkhyen sgra bla'i dmag tshogs thams cad / go mkhyen (= mtshon) dmag dang bcas nas / rgyal bu'i spyan sngar 'khod do /

As we have seen, the *gZi brjid* records the names of the *srid-pa'i sgra-bla* of the three proto-lineages or tribes of Tibet, the Phywa, dMu and gTsug. In a recent *Bon gyi bstan 'byung* (history of the Bon religion)

there is a compilation of cosmogonic lore found in the *gZi brjid*, in which these ancestral lineages are mentioned in the context of all other beings of the four worlds or quarters of the universe.[175] This is a syncretistic etiologic myth with motifs of both indigenous and Indian origin. In this account the ultimate origin of all things is space from which appear diverse forms, and then the cosmogonic couple Sangs-po 'bum-khri and Chu-lcam rgyal-mo (para i). Various types of primal deities succeed them including the couple Khri-lha gang-bu and dMu-btsun 'phrul-mo, who begot four sons (para ii). One of their sons is Khri-shes dkar-po who begot ethereal human beings. From them Mi-rje (Lord Man) and his consort Lha-mo snang-ma produced four sons, among whom is Shed-las-skyes, the leader of primal human beings (para iii). His progeny gave rise to Srid-pa ye-smon rgyal-po and Chu-rlung rdzu 'phrul, whose three sons were the progenitors of the Phywa, dMu and gTsug proto-lineages (para v). These three lineages are recorded as each originating from a dichotomous valley and mountain, or lake and rocky formation (paras vii, viii), preserving the ancient dyadic cosmogonic arrangement found primarily in the oral tradition. As we have seen, in the *sgra-bla* ritual attributed to gShen-rab, the patron *sgra-bla* of the Phywa, dMu and gTsug inhabit the same two-tiered geographic realms. Through the Phywa lineage, various types of deities, including the mountain gods appeared (para vi). Through the dMu lineage the four castes of humans appeared; among them were the six Tibetan royal clans and the populations of some adjoining countries (para vii). The gTsug lineage also gave rise to the populations of countries in the general vicinity of Tibet (para viii).

In the theogonic sequence described in the *Bon gyi bstan 'byung*,[176] the ancestral *sgra-bla* of the *gZi brjid* are noted: gSer-seng g.yu yi

[175] See *g.Yung drung bon gyi bstan 'byung phyogs bsdus*, chapter two (*Srid rtse nas na rag bar gyi srid pa nang bcud sems can gyi 'gro ba drug grub tshul*, pp. 22–42), written by dPal-ldan tshul-khrims, Bod-ljongs mi-dmangs dpe-skrun khang: Lhasa, 1988, pp. 31–33. Regarding the content the author writes, "These [passages] are the tradition of origination according to the *mDzad-mdo* (*gZi-brjid*)". See last line of the transliteration. Many of the structural elements of this cosmogony are also found in the Bon work *Nyi zer sgron ma*, rediscovered by Grub-thob bra-bo bsgom-nyag at rMa [chen] pom-ra (New Collection of Bon *bka' brten*, vol. 187, nos. 467–725), nos. 523 to 528. According to the colophon, seven *mtsho-sman* sisters and a nine-headed *klu-bdud* were appointed as protectors of the hidden text. Indications are that the *Nyi zer sgron ma* was authored circa the 14th century. For a discussion of this point see Martin 2001, p. 35 (fn. 14).

[176] Much of the *gZi brjid* cosmogonic lore recorded in *Bon gyi bstan 'byung* can be traced to earlier sources such as the *dBu nag mi'u 'dra chags*. For example, this 13th century text records the Srid-pa skos-drug (Six Delegates of Existence), which includes the Phywa, dMu and gTsug, in addition to the gNyan, Ye, and gNgam (Karmay 1998: 249, 250). For a discussion of early cosmogonic myths see Haarh 1969, pp. 231–270.

smin-ma can (Golden Lion With Turquoise Eyebrows) of the Phywa, Dung-seng mchong gi ral can (Conch Lion With an Agate Mane) of the dMu, and Gangs-seng lcags kyi sder can (Snow Lion With Claws of Iron) of the gTsug (paras vii, viii). While we know that the *srid-pa'i sgra-bla* are protective deities, their genealogical ties with the three ancestral lineages, mountain deities and other sundry beings of the universe are not clearly specified. The *Bon gyi bstan 'byung* states that the Phywa couple sTag-cha 'al 'ol[177] and Phywa-za khyad-khyud had four sons responsible for the creation of the *thugs-dkar* gods, the pure *srid-pa'i lha*, *yul-lha*, *gnyan*, etc. We can therefore infer, based on the interrelationships described in the text, that the *srid-pa'i sgra-bla* either originated with the Phywa proto-lineage or its progenitors Srid-pa ye-smon rgyal-po and Chu-rlung rdzu 'phrul, who also gave rise to the dMu and gTsug. The implication of this relationship is clear: the mountain gods, other environment-bound deities, and the *srid-pa'i sgra-bla* share a common descent; the degree of propinquity being as near as first cousins:

> (i) The origin of people and other living beings is infinite space, from which appeared the *dbyings-dgu*.[178] Among them, from the thought of

[177] The description of sTag-cha yal-yol's (variant spelling) palace and person is found in the indigenous cosmogony recorded in the *mKhas pa lde'u* (p. 229). This account is reminiscent of the depictions of the abodes of the mountain gods: "His celestial palace was formed by the five types of precious substance materials. The foundations were made from iron. The four corners were decorated with gold. The windows were crystal and agate. The cornices were turquoise. The *lcog* (battlements) were made from conch. The roof was covered by many crystal designs. If viewed from the outside the inside was seen, and if viewed from the inside the outside was seen (a transparent quality). Inside of that [castle], upon a throne of various kinds of precious materials, was the father sTag-cha yal-yol. On his body was a great *slag* (robe) of gold* with sleeves of crystal and turquoise trim. From each of the hairs on his body appeared a cavalry of soldiers. In his hands he held a *'gying 'khar* (scepter or baton) of gold and reposed [on his throne]."

* This line includes the word *ma-thung*, which does not appear to have any contextual meaning.

[178] The *dbyings-dgu* are the nine qualities of space: 1) *mu med-pa* (endless), 2) *'byams-yas-pa* (uniform), 3) *rgya-ma chad-pa* (unbounded), 4) *kha-gting med-pa* (without a surface or depth), 5) *dpag-tu med-pa* (immeasurable), 6) *dog-pa med-pa* (unrestricted), 7) *bdal-pa chen-po* (all-pervading), 8) *zad-pa med-pa* (interminable), 9) *'gyur-pa med-pa* (unchanging).

the self-aware mind, appeared the formless *lha-srin*,[179] and then the realms of form, and then came the couple Sangs-po 'bum-khri of existence and the great mother Chu-lcam rgyal-mo. Their progeny were the three spheres of existence and the six orders of sentient beings. Phywa, Srid and sKos[180] are the gods who protect the four worlds.[181]

(ii) Manifesting amidst the firmament is the appointed one Khri-lha gang-bu. He and dMu-btsun 'phrul-mo (Miraculous dMu Queen) mated and thier sons were bDe-khyung dkar-po (Blissful White Khyung), gTsang-rtse sgra-rgyal (Pure Peak King of Sound), Na-nam phyug-po, and Khri-shes dkar-po,[182] these four. These four *lha* protect the sentient beings of the four worlds. Khri-shes dkar-po came to 'Dzam-bu'i gling (The World) and his [sons] were the effulgent, full of light humans, *smra*[183] and *gshen*.[184]

(iii) Mi-rje dbang-po kun-khyab (All-Encompassing, Powerful Lord of Men) and Lha-mo snang-ma sgron-gsal (Effulgent Goddess Bright Lamp) coupled to produce these four sons: Shed-can (Strength-Possessed), Shed-bdag (Strength Master), Shed-bu (Strength Son)[185] and Shed-las-skyes (Strength Activity Birth). From Strength-Possessed, born of warmth in the east [world] Lus 'phags, arose [a race]. From Strength Master, miraculously born in the north [world] sGra-mi-snyan (Aural Sound People), arose [a race]. From Strength Son, born of eggs in the west world Ba-glang spyod (Cow Activity), arose [a race]. From Strength Activity Birth, born of wombs in the south world, arose a people.[186]

[179] A pre-existent form of *lha-srin*, the spirits who inhabit the dualistic universe.
[180] These three are the brothers: Phywa-rje ring-dkar, the protector and witness of all sentient beings; Srid-rje 'brang-dkar, he who gave rise to the various beings; and sKos-rje drang-dkar, he who appoints and delegates the functions of the various living beings. For their description see Norbu 1996, pp. 166, 274 (fn. 11); Karmay 1998, pp. 128, 129, 179 (fn. 31).
[181] *Gling-bzhi*. These are the four worlds or continents of the cardinal directions, flanking the world mountain Ri-rab.
[182] In the *Nyi zer sgron ma* the names of some of the deities in this sequence vary. See Lha de-khyung dkar-po, rTsong-rtse sgra-rgyal, Na-nam phyug-mo, and Khri-shel dkar-po (no. 523, lns. 4, 5).
[183] An early clan of Zhang-zhung. In this context probably denotes a class of divine beings whose function is to protect humans. A group of nine *smra* clan progenitors (sMra mi'u-dgu) are recorded in the *Pha rabs*. See Part Three, section i, p. 204
[184] Refers to both the human and divine practitioners of Bon.
[185] *Nyi zer sgron ma*: Shed 'bum (Hundred Thousand Strength) (no. 525, ln. 6).
[186] Epic literature has adopted both the egg and womb as the agencies of Gesar's birth. In one cycle of the epic entitled *Srid pa chags lugs* (*System of the Origination of Existence*) we read (pp. 16, 17): "Under the constellation sKar-ma-rgyal, an egg fell down from the 'secret path of worldly humans' (womb) of 'Gog-sa. She quickly picked it up and opened it up like lotus petals. Inside was the holy man Ge-sar, the all-accomplishing sun of the world."

(iv) Strength Activity Birth was also the leader of the humans. From his liaison with Lha-mo yid-gsal-ma (Clear Mind Goddess) four sons were born: rDzu 'phrul can (Miracle-Possessed), sTobs-ldan (Powerful One), 'Od-can (Radiance Possessed) and sGra-can (Sound-Possessed).[187] From Miracle-Possessed himself, the primordial lord of existence man in the south world, the *smra*, *mi'am-ci*,[188] and carnivorous animals appeared in that mixed world. From Powerful One the world of elephants, excellent horses, hoofed animals, *lto-phye*,[189] *grul 'bum*,[190] and the world of the assembly of *gdon* (demons) appeared. From the third [brother], Radiance Possessed, the world of apes and world of birds and other winged creatures appeared. From Sound-Possessed the carnivorous *srin-po*, and the world of red ants, black ants and other insects appeared.

(v) Thereafter, in the world of the primordial lord of existence people, from the liason of the chief Srid-pa ye-smon rgyal-po (King of Primordial Aspiration of Existence) and Chu-rlung rdzu 'phrul-mo (Miraculous Water Wind Female) three sons were produced, these three: Phywa-rje sgam-po (Fully Accomplished Lord of Phywa), dMu-rje btsun-po (Noble Lord of the dMu) and gTsug-rje Og-ko.[191] In the lineage of Phywa-rje sgam-po he was succeeded by Ye-gshen 'phrul-rgyal (Miraculous King Primordial gShen). His son was sMon-mi dbu-nag (Black Head Benediction Man).[192] His son was Ye-rje thang-po. His son was Lha-bu lod-pa. His son was rDzu 'phrul gser gyi mi-thung (Miraculous Little Golden Man).

(vi) His son the lord of the Phywa lineage sTag-cha 'al 'ol himself mated with Phywa-za khyad-khyud, producing the four brothers of the Phywa lineage: the great Yab-bla gdal-drug,[193] his younger brother

[187] This is a kind of semi-divine being possessed of great strength.
[188] Human-like spirits of various types.
[189] Earth spirits of the *sa-bdag* type.
[190] Spirits of the earth such as the *klu*.
[191] *Nyi zer sgron ma*: sKos-rje Og-sko (no. 527, ln. 1) and gTsug-rje Og-sko (no. 528, ln. 1).
[192] *Nyi zer sgron ma*: sMra-mi dbu-nag and his father Phya ye-shes 'phrul gyi rgyal-po (no. 527, ln. 2).
[193] In the *dBu nag mi'u 'dra chags* the Phywa lineage, particularly the god/group of gods known as Ya-bla bdal-drug/Ya-bla bdag-drug/Yab-lha bdal-drug, are regarded as the ancestors of humans. The earliest known mention of this deity is found in the Ninth century rKong-po pillar inscription and in Tun-huang manuscripts (*Pelliot 1286* and *Pelliot 1038*). See Richardson 1954, pp. 159–162; Haarh 1969, p. 311; Karmay 1998, pp. 250, 251. The first king of Tibet, gNya' khri btsan-po, was either the son or descendant of this group of deities (Haarh 1969: 317, 318). For a detailed discussion of the Yab-lha bdal-drug see Haarh 1969, pp. 224, 255, 258–262. The relevant part of the rKong-po pillar inscription (lns. 3–4) reads: "In earliest times, among the sons of the Phya [lineage] Ya-bla bdag-drug, Nya-khri btsan-po came

'Od-de gung-rgyal, his younger brother Khri-de gsum-po, and the youngest of the brothers Phywa-bla khri-shing.[194] The oldest Phywa lord Yab-bla bdal-drug[195] and Lha-lcam dkar-mo (Divine White Woman)

[down] to Lha-ri gyang-do as the lord of the country of humans." (*thog ma phyayabla bdag drug gi sras las / nya khri btsan po myi yul gyi rjer / lha ri gyang dor gshegs* . . .). *Pelliot 1286* (*Choix de Documents Tibétains Conservés à la Bibliothèque Nationale Complété par Quelques Manuscrits de L' India Office et du British Museum*, vol. II), a brief history of the Tibetan kings, contains the following passage (lns. 42–44): "The son* of Yab-bla bdag-drug stayed above the divine sky. There were three older brothers (*gcen*) and three younger brothers (*gcung*), and he was the middle one of the seven, seven sons in all. The middle one of the seven lDe-nyag khri btsan-po (gNya' khri btsan-po) descended down to earth as the lord and father of the country**. The son of the *lha* (alternatively, the divine son: *lha-sras*) was remaining as the king of the people and country*** when clearly he passed expeditiously to the heavens (passed away)." (*gnam lha' kyi bla na yab bla bdag drug bzhugs {pa'i} sras / gcen gsum gcung gsum na / khri 'i bdun tshigs dang bdun / {khri 'i bdun} tshigs kyi sras / lde nyag khri btsan po / dog la {yul yab} kyi rje dog yab kyi char du gshegs nas / lha sras {myi dang yul gyi rgyal po} mdzad cing bzhugs pa las / mngon du thal byung gdung du gshegs pa /* .

{} Illegible passages are bracketed. I have provided readings through a contextual understanding of the material.

* An additional syllable is not legible here but it does not significantly alter the syntax of this line.

** *yul yab*. Could also possibly read: *yul chab*, but these words are not legible in my facsimile of the text. Also, in this line the word *dog* (earth) is found twice (*rje dog yab*), an awkward and unneeded addition.

*** *myi dang yul gyi rgyal po*. This is the probable reading of this passage but these words are not legible in the text.

An account of King gNya' khri's descent from the realm of the gods is found in the *sGrag pa gling grags*, a 12th century Bon history of early Tibet attributed to Dran-pa nam-mkha' (folios 19b, ln. 6 to 22a, ln. 3, gNyan-rong manuscript; for bibliographic data on extant manuscripts see Martin 1997, pp. 28, 29). I provide an abbreviated account here (I have prepared a full translation of this theogony, which will appear in a subsequent work): From Sang (= Sangs) po ['bum khri] appeared Srid-rje, who had eighteen sons. His eldest son Lha-rab (= rabs) gnyen (= gnyan) rum rje coupled with Sri-lcam dur-ma and begot three sons: 'Phrul-cha 'al 'ol, Khri-cha 'al 'ol and sTag cha 'al 'ol. From the former two descended the *lha* lineage, most of which became the stars and planets, and the miraculous *lha* lineage, which became the *lha-ma yin* (demigods) of the savage *g.yen-khams* (cosmological and deity realms). The son of the union of sTag-cha 'al 'ol and 'Tsham-za khyad-khyud was the lord Yab-lha bdal-drug, who was also known as Lha'i dbang-po brgya-byin. He had altogether 33 consorts and seven beautiful sons. From the youngest three sons emerged the lineages of the *thugs-kar* gods, *thugs-dmar sprin*, and the *gnyan*, *ma-sangs* and *yul-lha* of existence. The middle son of sTag-cha 'al 'ol, Khri-sad ber-bdun tshig or Lha-rabs gnyan-rum rje, was sent by his father to be the king of the world. Khri-sad ber-bdun took as his wife, the daughter of his maternal uncle (dMu-rje btsan-po), the personage called dMu-lcam bra-ma. On the back of her neck appeared a growth as large as a stomach, which opened after nine months and ten days. From it appeared a scorpion of crystal with turquoise spots, a frog of gold with silver bumps on its back, a fish of turquoise with golden wings, and a tadpole of conch with a pearl *thor-tsug* (crown). Their mother surprised at their appearance hid them in a golden container behind a white curtain. She did three nights and four days of *phywa* and *g.yang* preservation performances; there-

mated and begot the divine lineage of the nine *thugs-dkar* brothers,[196] as well as propagating the pure kinds of gods of existence. 'Od-de gung-rgyal himself begot the orders of the *ge-khod* gods[197] and the

after her sons appeared as four men of wonderful manifestation. The scorpion of crystal was the man of crystal with turquoise hair, white clothes, white turban, and holding a white *'gying* (sceptre, symbol of royal authority). This was King gNya' khri btsan-po. The other three brothers were dispatched with him to earth as his protecting *gshen*. This *sGrag pa gling grags* theogony may preserve elements of a matrilineal royal genealogy, as reflected in the cross-cousin matrimonial alliance of Khri-sad ber-bdun, as well as in the animal precursors of King gNya' khri and his brothers; these are typical zoomorphic forms of the *klu/klu-mo*. On royal matriliny also see Part Three, section i, p. 202 (fn. 100).

194 *Nyi-zer sgron ma*: Phya-bla bram-shing (no. 527, ln. 4). In the *mDzod sgo sga 'grel*, the commentary to the *mDzod phugs* attributed to Dran-pa nam-mkha', it states; "[According to the Root Text], the brother and sister progeny of the *phya* were the four brothers of the sunny place, Lha-rje ri-dkar, Yab-lha bdal-drug, Mu-wer phra-phud, and Tshangs-sdang bya 'og, these four. The four sisters of the shady place were Ma-ther shel-lcags, Tshangs-dang rgyal-mo, Ne-slos brtan-ma, and Ting-nam g.yu-phyug, these four."

195 Spelling as in the text.

196 *Thugs-dkar/thug-kar/thugs-khar* are a class of deities related to the *sgra-bla*. Their worship is important in military adventures, statecraft, the prosperity of progeny, etc. See Snellgrove 1967, pp. 51–57; Norbu 1995, pp. 53, 54, 240 (fn. 63).

197 The indigenous cosmogony found in the 12th century *mKhas pa lde'u* (p. 231) records that Yab-lha brdal-drug mated with rMu-za mthing-khug sman and had nine sons, whose branches gave rise to the Zhang-zhung *lha* including the *ge-god* (= *khod*) gods. In Bon there are three major orders of *ge-khod* (Zhang-zhung language for *bdud 'dul*, 'demon conqueror') gods: *ye-shes* (wisdom manifestation of gShen-rab), *las* (activity related), and *rdzu 'phrul* (miraculous). The most common wisdom *ge-khod*, dBal-chen ge-khod, is dark blue in color and has eighteen arms. In his right hands he holds: a *ya-bdud* (male demon), a *ral-gri* (saber), a *dgra-sta* (ax of the enemy), a *srid-pa'i 'khor-lo* (wheel of existence), a *thog-mda'* (molten metal thunderbolt arrow), a *me-dpung* (mass of fire), a *chu-gri* (scimitar), a *dbyug-tho* (scepter), and a wheel or staff. In his left hands he holds: a *ma-bdud* (female demon), a *mda' gzhu* (bow and arrow), a *zhags-pa* (lasso), a *bwo-ba* (hammer), a *lcags-sgrogs* (iron chain), a *lcakyu* (iron hook), a *sni-rtse* (spear), a *rna-ru* (blue sheep horn), and *dpal-chu khol-ma* (flowing water). He is one of the five main Bon *yi-dam*, and is said to have been one of the most important deities in pre-Imperial kingdom of Zhang-zhung. dBal-chen ge-khod manifested as a *khyung*, lion, tiger and wild yak to control all the demons of Zhang-zhung. It is recorded that he plunged the world into darkness by the inadvertent slaughter of his mother. With the help of a tiny deity named Ku-byi mang-ke he purified his defilement with nine types of animal blood collected in a wild yak horn. For the complete myth see *dBal chen ge khod kyis (= kyi) dug phyung tshan dkar dmar spos bsang bcas* found in the *stod-cha* (first) volume entitled *Ge khod sgrub skor*, (New Collection of Bon *bka' brten*, vol. 242, nos. 81–102). The activity aspects of dBal-chen ge-khod reside on the main holy mountain of Ru-thog still known as Ge-khod gnyan-lung. The *Ge-khod la lha rten mkhar gzugs* text (same volume as above, nos. 357–461), nos. 373, ln. 4 to 374, ln. 1, informs us that Ge-khod manifested as the *ge-khod* of activity, the *lha* of the *this* (various types of magical rites). The mighty white *this* (*tshe-sgrub*, for long life empowerment) deities are invited from the summit of Ru-thog gangs-dkar. The secret red *this* (*dzo*, for making magical bombs) deities are invited

thirteen *mGul-lha.*[198] Khri-de gsum-po begot all the *yul-lha, gzhi-bdag, yul-sa,* and the realm of the *gnyan.* Phywa-bla khri-shing was issueless, as is commonly stated.

(vii) These are the fully endowed Phywa lineages that appeared from a golden mountain and turquoise valley on the right. [Their] *sgra-bla* is gSer-seng g.yu yi smin-ma can. dMu-rje btsun-po himself, who mated with Lha-mo 'od-gsal (Lustrous Goddess), had as sons the four castes: kings, lords, possessors of divine knowledge[199] and commoners. They begot the kingly lineage from which came four noble men and the six holders of the king's lineage. The four noble men were 'Khor-los bsgyur-rgyal (Turning the Wheel King), Drum-shing bcud 'thung (Drum Wood Sap Drinker), g.Yung-drung khyim-bdun mi (Man of the Seven Swastika Households), and Me-tog sbub-gnas (Dwelling Enclosed in a Flower). From 'Khor-bsgyur the six of the king's lineage were begotten: dMu, Shag, Hos, dPo, rGya and gNyan. These six [royal clans] unfolded successively.

(viii) The caste of lords includes the three [countries] rGya,[200] sTag-gzig,[201] and Bal-po (Kathmandu Valley). From the possessors of divine knowledge India,[202] Khrom,[203] and Li (Khotan) appeared. From the caste of commoners came the three Mon,[204] 'Jang[205] and Gru-gu.[206]

from Ru-thog gnyan-dmar rdzong. The secret black *this* (*bsad-pa,* for ritual slaughter of enemies) deities are invited from Ru-thog gnyan-phug dzong. The *bsTan 'byung yid bzhin nor bu* (probable name of text but has no title page; contains Bon cosmology, the origins of the Bon doctrine, and its propagation and decline), by Kun-grol grags-pa (born 1700) (New Collection of Bon *bka' brten,* vol. 270, nos. 326–552), nos. 326, ln. 5 to 327, ln. 3, records a variety of Ge-khod texts that sKyo-ston and Legs-blo (conjunct names) discovered at Zhang-zhung Ge-khod gnyan-lung. As these two personalities are mentioned in the *Srid-rgyud,* their discoveries predate 1310 (Karmay 1972: 171). Regarding the birth of the god Ge-khod, the anonymous text *Me ri dpa' bo gyad phur gyi bskang ba* records (no. 552, lns. 3, 4): "On the west side of the country of Zhang-zhung, on the peak of the Ru-thog mountain, the son of the union of sKu-bla rin-chen sgron-ma and mTsho-sman rgyal-mo dwells in the slate mountains and snow mountains."

[198] Commonly spelled *mgur-lha/'gur-lha.* A group of royal mountain deities. See Part Two, section vii, p. 89 (fn. 63)

[199] *Bram-ze.* Appellation for brahmans.

[200] China or Mongolia.

[201] More or less refers to the territory of cultural Tajikistan (currently divided between Tajikistan, China, Pakistan, and Afghanistan).

[202] In the *dBu nag mi'u 'dra chags,* the origins of the kings of the countries of lords and brahmans is attributed to a son of the dMu 'Phrul-bu dbang-ldan and a daughter of the *gnyan,* dKar-mo (Karmay 1998: 265, 266).

[203] Also called Phrom, corresponding with certain parts of greater Turkestan.

[204] Peoples of the Himalayan rim-land, south and west of Tibet.

[205] Also called lJang; regions in the southeastern borderlands of Tibet.

[206] Also called Dru-gu; a region of eastern Central Asia.

There is the noble lineage of the dMu,[207] appearing from the conch mountain and agate valley on the left. Their *sgra-bla* is Dung-seng mchong gi ral can. From the lord of the gTsug lineage[208] Og-ko himself, came U-rgyan,[209] Yu-gur,[210] Za-hor,[211] Muslim Gar-log,[212] Tho-gar[213] and Tibet. It is explained that Bru-sha[214] itself is the best of the gTsug [lineage]. These [countries] belong to the gTsug lineage, appearing from the crystal formation and lake of milk in the center.[215] Their *sgra-bla* is Gangs-seng lcags kyi sder-mo can (Snow Lion with the Iron Claws).

Transliteration of g.Yung drung bon gyi bstan 'byung *excerpt*

(i) 'gro ba mi yi grol lugs ni / mu med dbyings nas dbyings dgu 'byung ba'i snying / dran byed bsam pa'i rig pa 'byung (= byung) ba las / gzugs med lha srin de las gzugs khams byung / de la srid pa sangs po 'bum khri dang / yum chen chu lcam rgyal mo gnyis kyi sras / srid gsum rigs drug sems can srid pa la / phya (= phywa) srid skos kyis gling bzhi skyob pa'i lhar /

[207] Important Zhang-zhung lineage and one of the six proto-clans of Tibet. Tibet's first king gNya' khri btsan-po belonged to the dMu clan, as did gShen-rab. For a discussion of the dMu clan of the first king see Haarh 1969, pp. 138, 268, 269; Karmay 1998, pp. 250–252. For the dMu clan of gShen-rab see Dagkar 1999, pp. 45–52. The indigenous cosmogony recorded in the *mKhas pa lde'u* (pp. 233, 234) hints at the domestication of yaks during King gNya' khri's time. It states that the celestial gNya' khri btsan-po resided above the seven layers of *dmu* (sky) in a golden castle with golden turquoise cornices. On behalf of the twelve *rgyal-phran* (principalities) that had no leader, rTsibs kyi lha skar-ma yol-lde invited him to come down to earth. He said, "Come [down] as the lord of humans who have not a lord. Come [down] as the owner of yaks who have not an owner." (*mi rje med kyi rjer gshegs / g.yag bdag med kyi bdag tu gshegs /*).

[208] In the *dBu nag mi'u 'dra chags* the gTsug are referred to as ancestors of the *klu* (Karmay 1998: 253).

[209] Probably the region encompassing the Dir, Swat and Chitral districts in northern Pakistan.

[210] The Uighur cultural entity.

[211] Probably corresponding with regions near the northeastern fringes of Tibet. Cis-Himalayan principalities in Himachal Pradesh are sometimes referred to as Za-hor as well.

[212] Areas in Turkestan.

[213] Probably the ancient Central Asian region of Tokharia. Martin (1995: 56) identifies it with Takhar, in northeastern Afghanistan.

[214] The old Brushal cultural entity of northern Pakistan encompassing Hunza, Nagar, Gilgit, Punyal, and adjoining locales.

[215] *Nyi zer sgron ma*: 'lake of light' (*'od-mtsho*) (no. 528, ln. 1). *'Od-mtsho* is likewise found in the *sgra-bla* ritual of the *gZi brjid.* See p. 383, para vi.

(ii) nam mkha'i mthong sprul khri lha gang bu skos / de dang dmu btsun 'phrul mo bshos pa'i sras / bde khyung dkar po gtsang rtse sgra rgyal dang / na nam phyug po khris shes dkar po bzhi / gling bzhi'i sems can mgon skyobs lha bzhis byed / khri shes dkar po 'dzam bu'i gling gshegs par / snang ba 'od ldan mi smra gshen gsum srid /

(iii) de las mi rje dbang po kun khyab dang / lha mo snang ma sgron gsal gnyis kyi sras / shed can shed bdag shed bu shed las skyes / bzhi byung shed can las ni drod skyes kyi / shar gyi lus 'phag mi grol shed bdag las / rdzus skyes byang gi sgra mi snyan pa grol / shed bur sgong skyes nub gling ba glang spyod / shed las skyes las mngal skyes lho gling grol /

(iv) de yang mi dbang shed las skyes pa dang / lha mo yid gsal ma gnyis bsdebs pa las / rdzu 'phrul can dang stobs ldan 'od can dang / sgra gcan bzhi byung rdzu 'phrul can nyid las / ye rje srid pa mi yi gling nyid dang / smra mi'am ci dang sder chags khrom gling grol / stobs ldan las ni glang chen rta mchog sogs / byol song gling dang lto phye grul 'bum dang / gdon tshogs gling grol gsum pa 'od chen las / spre'u'i gling dang 'dab chags bya'i gling grol / sgra gcan las ni sha za srin po dang / grog ma dmar nag 'bu srin gling du grol /

(v) de las ye rje srid pa mi yi gling / gtso bo srid pa ye smon rgyal po dang / chu rlung rdzu 'phrul mo gnyis bsdebs pa las / sras gsum byung ste phya (= phywa) rje sgam po dang / dmu rje btsun po gtsug rje Og ko gsum / phya (= phywa) rje sgam po'i sras brgyud rim pa ru / ye gshen 'phrul rgyal de yi sras po ni / smon mi dbu nag de sras ye rje thang [po] / de sras lha bu lod pa de yi sras / rdzu 'phrul gser gyi mi thung de sras ni /

(vi) phya (= phywa) rabs stag cha 'al 'ol rje nyid dang / phya (= phywa) za khyad khyud bshos par srid pa yi / phya (= phywa) rabs mched bzhi yab bla gdal drug che / de 'og 'od de gung rgyal de yi 'og / khri de gsum po de yi 'og tha chung / phya (= phywa) bla khram (= khri) shing bzhi byung che phya (= phywa) rje / ya (= yab) bla bdal drug lha lcam dkar mo gnyis / bshos sras lha rabs thugs dkar mched dgu grol / gzhan yang srid pa gtsang ma'i lha rigs 'phel / 'od de gung rgyal nyid las ge khod kyi / lha rigs dang ni mgul lha bcu gsum grol / khri de gsum por yul lha gzhi bdag ste / yul sa gnyan khams thams cad grol ba'o / phya (= phywa) bla khri shing rgyud chad ces su grags /

(vii) de rnams sgam po phya (= phywa) yi brgyud pa ste / g.yas kyi gser ri g.yu yi lung nas grol / sgra bla gser seng g.yu yi smin ma can / dmu rje btsun po'i brgyud pa dmu yi rabs / nyid dang lha mo 'od gsal bshos pa la / sras ni rgyal rje bram ze dmangs rigs bzhi / rgyal rigs nyid las 'phags pa'i mi bzhi dang / gdung brgyud 'dzin pa'i rgyal po drug tu byung / 'phags pa'i mi bzhi 'khor los bsgyur rgyal dang / drum shing bcud 'thung g.yung drung khyim bdun mi / me tog sbub gnas bzhi ste 'khor bsgyur las / gdung rgyud rgyal drug grol te dmu shag hos / dpo rgya gnyan drug rgyal rgyud rim par srid /

(viii) rje rigs rgya dang stag gzig bal po gsum / bram zer rgya gar khrom dang li yul grol / dmangs rigs las ni mon 'jang gru gu gsum / de rnams btsun pa dmu yi brgyud pa ste / g.yon gyi dung ri mchong gi lung nas grol / sgra bla dung seng mchong gi ral pa can / gtsug rje Og ko nyid las U rgyan dang / yu gur za hor gar (kha che)* log tho gar bod / bru sha gtsug gi dang ma nyid du bshad / de dag rnams ni gtsug gi brgyud pa ste / thad kyi shel brag 'o ma'i mtsho las grol / sgra bla gangs seng lcags kyi sder mo can / de dag mdzad mdo'i dgongs pa sgrol lugs so /

* Interpolation in text.

The fortune-bestowing function of the ancestral *srid-pa'i sgra-bla* is the theme of a ritual text entitled *g.Yang len*, which is found in a collection of invocations to various types of Bon deities.[216] In this *g.yang-len* (ritual for shoring up the good fortune of Bon religious practitioners) a number of zoomorphic *sgra-bla* are mentioned that are patrons of Bon practitioners, as well as being emblematic of the ancient Bon clans of lDong, dBra, 'Gru and sGo of the Phywa proto-lineage. The lDong, dBra, 'Gru and sGo are also one ordering of the four proto-clans of Tibet (Rus-chen-bzhi). The animal deities associated

[216] See the chapter *bSang mchod yid bzhin nor bu* in *gSol kha* (New Collection of Bon *bka' brten*, vol. 87, nos. 1271–1563), nos. 1550, ln. 4 to 1551, ln. 5. No author or compiler is mentioned in the *g.Yang len bzhugs so.* Ostensibly, it is an ancient ritual.

with them in the *g.Yang len* are the clan symbols and protectors. This same fundamental bond between humans and clan spirits is associated with gNyan-chen thang-lha and other environment-based deities in texts such as *Pha rabs mthong ba kun gsal*. As indicated in *Pha rabs*, these zoomorphic *sgra-bla* may also have been the progenitors of the clans in early etiologic myths, but this cannot be substantiated with the information at hand.

As we have seen, the zoomorphic iconography, fortune-bestowing attributes and ancestral functions of the *srid-pa'i sgra-bla* are also part and parcel of the cult of mountain divinities. This evidence illustrates how closely the two classes of deities are bound in the Bon literary tradition. These shared functions seem to account for their interchangeability in the ancient Bon and contemporary tradition of spirit-mediumship. In the *g.yang-len* ritual, after the construction of a *mdos* (temporary support) for the *sgra-bla*, they are invoked in order that the well-being and glory of the *gshen* is enhanced. When the *mdos* is offered to the *sgra-bla*, the ritualists symbolically retain the elements of good fortune represented by these deities. This retention helps guard the well-being of those participating in the ritual:

> (i) *bSwo*! I am the son of the lineage of existence. I, the Bon-po of the lineage of existence, call the *lha* that attends my lineage. This evening help the *gshen*. mKha' la lding-ba'i khyung-chen (Great Khyung Soaring in the Sky), dPa' rtsal che-ba'i seng-ge (Great Powerful Heroic Lion) and Drag-rtsal che-ba'i g.yu 'brug (Great Fierce Powerful Turquoise Dragon) are the three *sgra-bla* that protect the *gshen*. Today, I do not dispatch [the *sgra-bla*] with the *mdos*, I take back the fortune.
>
> (ii) rDzu 'phrul rma-bya 'jol-mkhan (Miraculous[217] Fine Feathered Peacock), 'Phur-shes bya-rgod thang-dkar (Lammergeier with the Knowledge of Flight) and bSe'i bya-glag smug-po (Reddish Brown Copper Eagle) are the soaring three brother *sgra-bla*. Today, I do not dispatch [the *sgra-bla*] with the *mdos*, I take back the fortune.
>
> (iii) Lha-rta mtshal-bu (Divine Vermilion Horse) of the lDong, Dung-sha dkar-mo (Conch White Hind) of the dBra, Lha g.yag-dkar-po (Divine White Yak) of the 'Gru, and rGya-stag dmar-po (Large Red Tiger) of the sGo are the four *sgra-bla* brothers of the Phywa lineage.[218] Today, I do not dispatch [the *sgra-bla*] with the *mdos*, I take back the fortune. Myur-mgyog che-ba'i bya-khra (Great Speedy Hawk) is the *sgra-bla* of the dMu *gshen*[219] of existence.

[217] This refers to the dazzling color and beautiful form of the peacock's many feathers.

[218] In a *bla-bslu* ritual these four clans (with the addition of one known as sGa) have soul figurines (*bla-gzugs*) in the form of animals (Karmay 1998: 327, 328).

g.Yang len bzhugs so *excerpt*

(i) bswo nga ni srid pa rgyud kyi bu / srid pa rgyud kyi bon po yis / rigs su mchod pa'i lha bdar na / do mo (= mdo) gshen gyi kha 'dzin mdzod / mkha' la lding ba'i khyung chen dang / dpa' rtsal che ba'i seng ge dang / drag rtsal che ba'i g.yu 'brug gsum / gshen la mgon pa'i sgra bla yin / de ring mdos la mi rdzong g.yang du len /

(ii) rdzu 'phrul rma bya 'jol mkhan dang / 'phur shas (= shes) bya rgod thang dkar dang / bse'i bya glag smug po gsum / lding ba'i sgra bla mched gsum yin / de ring mdos la mi rdzong g.yang du len /

(iii) ldong gi lha rta mtshal bu dang / dbra'i dung sha dkar mo dang / 'dru (= 'gru) yi lha g.yag dkar po dang / sgo'i rgya star (= stag) dmar po dang / phya (= phywa) rab (= rabs) mched bzhi'i sgra bla yin / de ring mdos la mi rdzong g.yang du len / myur mgyog che ba'i bya khra de / dmu gshen srid pa'i sgra bla yin /

The origin myth of the *sgra-bla* of the six proto-clans (Bod mi'u gdung-drug) is found in *dBu nag mi'u 'dra chags*, a cosmogonic text attributed to King Khri-srong lde-btsan.[220] The *sgra-bla* (called *dgra-bla* in this work) and clans cited in this text vary somewhat from those contained in the *g.Yang len* text. They include: lDong—turquoise dragon; dBra—*khyung* with iron beak and claws; 'Gru—divine yak; sGa—golden tiger; dBal—crystal goat; and lDa—white conch bitch. The account begins by stating that the patriarch of the Tibetans was a deity known as Khri-tho chen-po, who fathered the 'six sons' with three different divine wives (para i). These wives belonged to the *gnyan*, *dmu* and *srin* classes of elemental spirits. Styled 'Grandfather' (*A-mye*), Khri-tho chen-po had a female yak hybrid stolen by seven *bdud* horsemen (para ii). While pursuing the thieves, he killed his

[219] Priests of the ancient dMu lineage.

[220] *Appearance of the Little Black-Headed People*, folios 20a, ln. 2 to 22b, ln. 2. For this translation, I have used the photographic reproduction of the text found in Karmay and Nagano 2002. This excerpt is also translated in Karmay 1998, pp. 271–273.

wife, the daughter of the *gnyan,* who had manifested as a conch frog in order to protect him (para iii). Her father, the grandfather of the *gnyan* named rGan-dhe-ba, responded by killing Khri-tho chen-po. Paralleling a tradition that persisted in nomadic areas of Tibet until the 1950s, a mediator arranged for the blood-money (*pha-stong*) that the *gnyan* had to pay the six clans for the death of their progenitor (para iv). This blood-price took the form of zoomorphic *dgra-bla* whose function was to protect the clans (paras iv, v).

The six clans however, were not satisfied with their compensation and resolved to take their revenge on the *bdud,* whom they held responsible for the death of Khri-tho chen-po. They each purchased a horse from a different country, and the lDong, dBra and sGa individually rode out to meet the enemy but turned back at the first sign of danger (para vi). The two smaller clans, dBal and lDa, are not recorded as even attempting an attack on the *bdud.* The author makes it clear that the lack of courage shown by these clans is common knowledge when he insinuates that all know the truth about them. Nevertheless, with divine assistance and special weapons, the 'Gru clan was able to defeat the enemy in merciless combat, which includes the slaughtering of the *bdud* children (para vii). Upon their victory, the flag, saddle and tiger of the *bdud* were made the various trophies of the six clans (paras viii, ix). From the tiger-skin objects as fundamental as the quiver and hair decorations originated. The ambivalent relationship that Tibetans had with the *bdud* (sometimes demon, sometimes deity) is reinforced by their provision of the nectar of human immortality (*mi mi 'chi ba'i bdud rtsi*). While the tales of struggle between the *bdud* and early Tibetans have assumed a mythic status,[221] the possibility that the *bdud* were in fact originally an aboriginal people displaced by Bodic tribes cannot be discounted:[222]

[221] For other accounts of conflicts between the *bdud* and human allies see Part Three, section v, pp. 283–286.

[222] In any case, in Bar-tha (Nag-chu county), there is a well known clan called Kye, which is said to be descended from the *bdud.* My research shows that there are twelve households remaining that belong to this clan, which reside in the Nadmar chung and gSang-stod divisions of Bar-tha. The progenitors of the Kye clan are popularly said to be bDud klu-btsan and sTobs-rgyal (his minister) of Ge-sar epic fame. An ancient mountaintop fortress attributed to sTobs-rgyal is found in the region (Bellezza 2002a: 25). In the description of this fortress, on the basis of local information, I call it sKyes-ri (Growth Mountain), but subsequent informants assure me that this should be Kye-ri (Mountain of the Kye). Kye clan members now belong to both the Bon and Buddhist faiths, although according to the local Bon-po, all of Bar-tha was once a Bon country. I believe it likely that there is a historical correspondence between the geographically related *bdud* of the Mi-bdud cycle (bDud-bon) and the *bdud* of the Kye clan.

(i) The Tibetan 'Dzom-la-phrom[223] had a son, Khri-tho chen-po. Khri-tho chen-po married gNyan-lcam dkar-mo. They had three sons: the elder lDang, the middle one dBra and the younger one 'Gru. He also married dMu-za and had dMu-tsha-sga. He [also] married Srin-mo go-zu can and they had two sons: the elder dBal and the younger lDa. These are called the Three Mothers and Six Sons of Tibet (Bod ma-gsum bu-drug).

(ii) The patriarch is the grandfather Khri-thog chen-po,[224] who kept a conch [white] *mdzo-mo* (female yak hybrid) at the base of the white-faced divine mountain. In the mornings and evenings he milked her [getting] seven pails [full of milk]. Grandfather tended the *mdzo-mo.* The seven swift *bdud* horsemen plunderers drove away the one called mDzo-mo-sman. Grandfather pursued the *bdud* and arrived at Sa-la bar gyi gling-phug gong-ma (Highest Cave Realm of the Middle Earth).

(iii) At that time and period, the white daughter of the *gnyan* feared that the *bdud* would kill Grandfather. She conjured herself as a conch frog. When Grandfather turned right she blocked him from the right. When Grandfather turned left she blocked him from the left. She stopped grandfather and did not let him go. Grandfather became angry with her. He quickly took out the sword at his waist and struck the middle of the conch frog. The frog screamed out three times. rGan-dhe-ba, the grandfather of the *gnyan,* the old *gnyan,* heard her. He thought, 'he has killed my daughter'. He shot the sharp and powerful black arrow of the *gnyan* and killed Grandfather Khri-tho chen-po.

(iv) The Grandfather of the six clans of Tibet had been killed by the *gnyan.* [The clans] blamed the black (evil) *bdud.* The six clans of Tibet said, "We will demand blood-money from the *gnyan.*" At that time and period the son of the *phya* sPyi-gtsug rgyal-ba mediated between the humans and *gnyan.* He said, "Now you *gnyan* must pay blood-money." The blood money paid to the six clans of Tibet was that the lDong were given lDong lha-rma, a turquoise dragon with a copper crest. He stays high in the invisible expanse of space. He promised to be the *dgra-bla* of the expanding and wealthy lDong.

(v) The dBra were given dBra-mo dbra-bkra, a *bya-khyung* with an iron beak and claws. He roves around space and guards the snow mountains. He promised to be the *dgra-bla* of the expanding and skillful

[223] For an account of 'Dzom-la-phrom see Karmay 1998, pp. 269, 270.

[224] Spelling as in the text.

dBra. The 'Gru were given 'Gru-mo phrom-phrom, a divine yak with extremely sharp horns. He guards the soul of the 'Gru and wanders around the rocky mountains. He promised to be the *dgra-bla* of the courageous 'Gru. The sGa were given sKar-ma legs-po (Good Star), a golden tiger with vermilion markings. He wanders in the three worlds and looks for the sGa. He is the *dgra-lha* of the developing and wealthy sGa. As their share of the blood money the two [clans] dBal and lDa were respectively given a bay-colored crystal goat and a white conch bitch.

(vi) As the blood money was small they were bitterly disappointed [and said], "We already got the blood money from the *gnyan*, when will we take revenge on the *bdud*?" Each of the four brothers purchased a horse. The lDong purchased gSal-ba yang-mdos of China. The Chinese [said to them], "You are the lord of the horse. You are the master of the horse." The lDong went to take his revenge on the *bdud* [however], upon seeing the top of the flag of the *bdud*, he returned back. All know whether or not he returned back. The dBra purchased gSang-rje yag-pa of sGo. The dBra went to take his revenge on the *bdud* [however], upon hearing the barking dogs of the *bdud*, he returned back. All know whether or not he returned back. The sGa purchased dMar-nya nyal-po of 'Jang. He went to take his revenge on the *bdud* [however], upon reaching the first habitation of the *bdud*, he returned back. All know whether or not he returned back.

(vii) The 'Gru purchased Tril-rje yag-pa of the Hor. He went to take his revenge on the *bdud*. He held the golden *dhan-chen* (staff) in his hand. He struck the earth three times with the snakehead *ber-rga* (club) of the *gnyan*. When he arrived up at Kun-snang (All Clear) in the east, an army of many *gnyan* rapidly congregated. Many *lha* and humans stalwartly supported the 'Gru. They sacked the *bdud* castle of Phyed rdzong. They slew the big black belly man of the *bdud*. They imprisoned the *bdud* lord Khyab-pa lag-ring. They smashed many *bdud* children on the rocks.

(viii) They obtained however, much of the beer of the *bdud*, the nectar of human immortality. It was made the hero's beer of the A-lcag 'gru. The *ze-ba*[225] black flag of the *bdud* was made the hero's flag of the A-lcag 'gru. It then became called the hero's flag. The tiger head of the slain evil pale yellow tiger of the *bdud* was made the first offering[226] to the big brother lDong. It then became known as the first offering.

[225] Like bristles on the top of a pig's back?
[226] *Phud* (prime offering) in this and the next line of the text is preceded by the word *mnong* (shame), which does not appear to have contextual meaning. I believe that instead the word *nom* (spoils of war) is intended and that the correct reading is: 'prime offering of the spoils of war'.

(ix) The saddle of the black *bdud* was made the heroic consumable of the Se-khyung dbra. It was called the courageous consumable of the heroes. The right torso of the evil pale yellow tiger was made the ornamented tiger-skin quiver of the 'Gru lord Lha-dbang thod-dkar (White Turban Power Lha). It then became the tiger-skin quiver of the *stag-shar* (heroic males). The left torso of the evil pale yellow tiger was made the tiger hair decoration of the 'Gru female Zang-yag ma. It became the tiger hair decoration of women. The *khyung* child of inner primordial existence was made the delectable consumable of the younger brother sGa. It became the delectable consumable of the younger brother. That is the history of the revenge taken on the *bdud*.

Transliteration of the dBu nag mi'u 'dra chags *excerpt*

(i) bod 'dzang (= 'dzom) la phrom la sras khri tho chen po yod / khri tho chen po de / gnyen (= gnyan) lcam dkar mo khab tu bzhes pa la / sras 3* yod pa de / che ba ldang / 'breng ('bring) ba dbra / chung ba 'gru / de nas dmu za khab tu bzhes pa la / dmu tsha sga srid / srin mo go zu can / khabs su (= khab tu) bzhes pa la / sras gnyis yod pa de / che ba dbal / chung ba lda / bod ma gsum bu drug bya ba yin /

(ii) pha rgan A mnye (= mye) khri thog chen po yin / de lha ri bzhur po'i mthil nas / dung gi mdzo mo sman bya skyong / nang nub zo ba bya bdun bzho / Ā (= A) mye mdzo mo skyang ba la / bdud kyi jag pa rkya bdun rgyug / mdzo mo sman bya dad (= ded) nas song / A myes bdud la ra mda' byas / sa la bar gyi gling phug gong mar sleb /

(iii) dus dang skal (= bskal) pa de tsam na / gnyen (= gnyan) gyi bu mo dkar mo des / A mye bdud kyi gsod dog (= dogs) nas / dung gi sbal pa 1 tu brdzus / A mye g.yas song g.yas nas bkag / A mye g.yon song g.yon nas bkag / A mye bkag nas 'gro ma bcol / A mye de la thugs 'khros nas / rkad (= rked) nas gri de rtsar kyi (= kyis) bton / dung gi sbal pa'i rked la brgyab / sbal pa tsi ku len 3 btab / gnyen (= gnyan) rgan de'i snyan gyi (= gyis) thos / A mye gnyan rgan dhe ba des / khos nga'i bu mo bsad dgongs nas / gnyan gyi gzer mda' nag po 'phong ('phangs) / A mye khri tho chen po bsad /

* Roman numerals are used to designate the Tibetan numerals found in the text.

(iv) gdung drug bod kyi A bo gnyan gyis bsad / le len nag po bdud la blang / gdung drug bod kyi zhal na re / nges bdud la pha sha len be zer / gnyan la pha stong 'ded be zer / dus dang skal pa de tsam na / phya bu spyi gtsug rgyal ba des / mi dang gnyan gyi bar gzu byas / da khyod gnyan gi (= gyis) gdung drug pha stong 'jol cig byas / gnyan gyi gdung drug la pha stong 'jal ba la / ldong la ldong lha rma phrom byin / de g.yu 'brug zang kyi ze ba can / mtho' mi mngon nam mkha'i dbyings na 'dug / ldong dar phyug can gyi dgra bla byed pa chad /

(v) dbra la dbra mo dbra bkra byin / bya khyung lcag (= lcags) gi (= kyi) mchu lder (= sder) can / nam mkha'i (mkha') 'grim zhing gangs srong nyul / dbra btsun dar can gyi dgra bla byed pa chad / 'gru la 'gru mo phrom phrom byin / lha g.yags dbal gyi ra co can / 'gru bla nyul zhing rdza ri 'grim / 'gru dpa' ngar gyi dgra bla byed pa chad / sga la skar ma leg (= legs) po byin / gser stag mtshal gyi ri mo can / kham gsum 'grim zhing sga la nyug / sga phyug dar can gyi dgra bla yin / dbal lda 2 kyi stong skal la / shel gyi ra skyes khams (= kham) pa dang / dung gi khyi mo dkar mo byin /

(vi) pha stong chung ba'i snying nad kyis / gnyan la pha stong lon zin te / bdud la pha sha nam len byas / spun 4 mi ri (= re) rta re nyos / ldong gis rgya'i gsal ba yang mdos nyos / rgyas kyang rta rje rta bdag byas / ldong bdud la pha sha len du song / bdud kyi dar gho mthong nas log / de E log ma log kun gi (= gyis) shes / dbras sgo'i gsang rje yag pa nyos / dbra bdud la pha sha len du song / bdud kyi khyi skad thos nas log / E log ma log kun gyis shes / sgas 'jong ('jang) gi dmar nya nyal pa nyos / bdud la pha sha len du song / bdud kyi dud gho mthong nas log / E log ma log kun gyis shes /

(vii) 'grus hor gyi tril rje yag pa nyos / bdud la pha sha len du song / gser gyi dhan chen phyag na bsnams / gnyan gyi ber rga sbrul gho sa la len 3 brdab / shar kun snang gi gong khar phyin tsam na / gnyan dmag mang po 'ub kyi (= kyis) 'dus / 'gru'i rgyab brten lha mi mang po byas / bdud mkhar phyed rdzong phab / bdud kyi mi nag gsus chen bsad / bdud rje khyab pa lag ring btson du bzung / bdud phrug mang po brag la brdab /

(viii) bdud chang gang gi thob pa des / mi mi 'chi ba'i bdud rtsi yin / A lcag 'gru'i dpa' chang byas / bdud kyi dar nag ze ba de / A lcag 'gru'i dpa' dar byas / dpa' dar zer ba de nas srid / bdud kyi ngam stag skyo'o bsad pa'i stag gho (= mgo) de / pho bo ldong la mnong phud byas / mnong phud zer ba de nas srid /

(ix) nag po bdud kyi rta sga de / se khyung dbra'i la dpa' zas byas / dpa' bo'i dpa' zas de la zer / ngam stag skya' bo'i rtsib gshog yas (= g.yas) pa de / 'gru rje lha dbang thod dkar gyi stag ral rgyan can byas / stag shar ba'i stag ral de nas srid / ngam stag skya bo'i rtsib gshog g.yon pa de / 'gru mo zang yag ma'i stag phud byas / sman bu mo'i stag phud de nas srid / ye srid nang gi khyung phrug de / nu bo sga la gces zas byas / bu chung gi gces zas de nas srid / de bdud la pha sha blang lug (= lugs)' yin /

In another text found in the *gSol kha* volume there are more invocations to the *srid-pa'i sgra-bla*.[227] In this offering ritual, a large host of *srid-pa'i sgra-bla*, who came into being in primordial times, are enumerated. Likewise, these passages illustrate the parallels that exist between the *srid-pa'i sgra-bla* and *yul-lha*. A group of three animal *sgra-bla* are said to have originated with castles of molten metal thunderbolts, thunder and lightning (para ii), residences that are also attributable to mountain deities. *sGra-bla* described as conch white men on horseback (para iii) are also reminiscent of the iconography of *yul-lha*. *sGra-bla* coming from *lha-ri* (divine mountains) (paras iv, v) strongly resemble the conventional descriptions of mountain divinities as well. Like the 'worldly deities', the *sgra-bla* must be purified of anthropogenic contamination (para vii). Finally, the offering of yaks and sheep and the demand made on the *srid-pa'i sgra-bla* to do whatever is wanted of them by the ritualists (para vii) finds resonance in the *gsol-kha* and *bskang-ba* liturgies for the mountain gods. In short, there are few practical differences between the *srid-pa'i sgra-bla* and 'lesser' members of the indigenous pantheon:

> (i) *Kye*! We remunerate according to your wishes[228] the *lha* and armies of *sgra-bla* who appeared from the lineage of existence of the resplendent

[227] See *bSang brngan bsam 'grub yid bzhin nor bu bzhugs pa legs swho*, nos. 1667–1721 in *gSol kha* (New Collection of *Bon bka' brten*, vol. 87), written by sPrul-sku blo-ldan snying-po (born 1360), nos. 1691, ln. 2 to 1694, ln. 3. This chapter details incense offerings to the various Bon deities in hierarchical order: *yi-dam*, high protectors, *sgra-bla*, and *yul-lha* and *gzhi-bdag*.

[228] *brNgan*. This means 'appropriate payment' or 'just compensation', and refers

divine palace. We remunerate according to your wishes the brilliant full of light *sgra-bla*, who come from the top of a shinning stepped [celestial] platform. We remunerate according to your wishes the miraculous *sgra-bla* of primordial existence, who manifest from the primordium and existence. We remunerate according to your wishes the primordial aspiration *sgra-bla*, who appear from luminosity and light rays.

(ii) We remunerate according to your wishes the armies of *thugs-dkar* gods, who come from the self-created jeweled palace. We remunerate according to your wishes the great hero Wer-ma nyi-nya,[229] who comes from inside the darkened molten pig-iron castle. We remunerate according to your wishes the dragon, *khyung* and lion *sgra-bla*, who come from castles of *thog* (molten metal bombs), thunder and lightning respectively. We remunerate according to your wishes the defending, protective *bya-rdang*,[230] who come from the luminous middle flight path of the bird.

(iii) We remunerate according to your wishes the great gods, conch [white] men [with] conch [white] horses, who come from a white light emitting palace. We remunerate according to your wishes the resplendent men [with] resplendent[231] horses *sgra-bla*, who come from the battle of the allies and enemies. We remunerate according to your wishes the bouncing *sgra-bla* of the armor and helmet, who come from the castle of crossed arms. We remunerate according to your wishes the all-powerful aiding *gshen*[232] who come from the castle of miraculous primordial existence.

(iv) We remunerate according to your wishes the good fortune little *phywa* of precognition (*mngon-shes*), who come from the partitioned castle of miracles and virtues. We remunerate according to your wishes the *spyi-rje* (universal lord) Khyung-nag ral-chen (Great Crested Black Khyung), who comes from the expanse of primordial existence space. We remunerate according to your wishes the luminous nine men [with] nine horses, who come from the top of the little divine mountain of existence. We remunerate according to your wishes the *sgra-bla* of the Phywa, dMu and gTsug, who come from the three branching valleys of existence.

to offerings given to the deities in the course of worship. I have chosen to translate this as, 'we remunerate according to your wishes,' in keeping with the semantic arrangement of *gsol-kha* literature.

[229] A lion-headed deity, with ear tufts like a lynx and horns like a *khyung*.

[230] A kind of *sgra-bla* probably associated with a support of the same name. According to Bon tradition, the *bya-rdang/bya-ldang* shrine was used in the pre-Imperial period for the protective deities of the sNang-gshen vehicle.

[231] *bKra*. This word connotes that the *sgra-bla* are in shining battle array and ride brightly caparisoned horses.

[232] Here *gshen* refers to a class of divine beings.

(v) We remunerate according to your wishes the *sgra-bla* of light and darkness, who come from the margin of existence and non-existence. We remunerate according to your wishes the *sgra-bla* vanquishers of hateful enemies, who come from the margin of *ye* and *ngam*. We remunerate according to your wishes the eight purifying deities of existence, who come from high above the divine mountain and limpid waters. We remunerate according to your wishes the thirteen forceful defending attendants on the white peak of the resplendent divine mountain.

(vi) We remunerate according to your wishes the thirteen good itinerant gods[233] of guests, who come from the upper part of the road of itinerant guests. You are the various *sgra-bla* of the lineage of existence, the *thugs-kar*, the divine armies, the convocation of *cang-seng*,[234] *wer-ma*, and the defending *bya-rdang* protectors.

(vii) Beckoning, we the yogis call you. We steadfastly support you with armor and armaments. Entreating, we entreat you with yaks and sheep. Offering, we offer you tea and the first portions of food. Remunerating, we remunerate you with hearts[235] and *gtor-ma*. Purifying, we purify you with *mkhan*, juniper and *bal-bu*. Go forth, we send you [against] our hateful enemies. Entrusting, we entrust you to empower us; mobilize and befriend us. Conquer the enemies who hate us and eliminate obstacles. Carry out whatever we wish and intend.

Excerpt of Yid bzhin nor bu

(i) kye 'od gsal lha yi pho brang nas / srid pa rgyud las grol ba'i / lha dang sgra bla'i dmag tshogs brngan / 'od kyi khri 'phang gang (= gong) ma nas / snang ba 'od ldan sgra bla brngan / ye dang yong (= yod) las sprul pa yi / ye srid 'phrul gyi sgra bla brngan / 'od dang zer las grol ba'i / grol phug smon pa'i sgra bla brngan /

(ii) rang grub rin chen sku mkhar nas / thugs kar lha yi dmag tshogs brngan / khro chu mun rub mkhar nang nas / dpa' chen wer ma nyi nya brgnan / thog 'brug glog gi sku mkhar nas / 'brug khyung seng gsum sgra bla brngan / 'od kyi bya khri bar ma nas / mgon po bya rdang srung ma brngan /

(iii) 'od dkar 'phro ba'i gzhal yas nas / lha chen dung mi dung rta brngan / dgra zun 'thab pa'i g.yul so nas / dgra (= sgra) bla mi

[233] The *byes-lha* are a group of *sgra-bla* who protect travelers.

[234] Protectors of travelers and estates (Snellgrove 1967: 63).

[235] In the modern ritual dough imitations are used.

bkra ta (= rta) bkra brngan / mtshon cha bsnol ba'i sku mkhar nas / sgra bla go zhu 'phar ma brngan / ye srid 'phrul gyi sku mkhar nas / kha 'dzin ye gshen dbang rdzogs brngan /

(iv) 'dzang pa 'phrul gyi mkhar sgrom nas / mngon shes phya'u g.yang dkar brngan / ye srid nam mkha'i dbyings rum nas / spyi rje khyung nag ral chen brngan / yod kyi lha ri del gong nas / 'od zer mi rta bco brgyad brgnan / srid pa'i yod lung ral gsum nas / phya (= phywa) dmu gtsug gsum sgra bla brngan /

(v) yod med gnyis kyi so mtshams nas / snang mun gnyis kyi sgra bla brngan / ye ngam gnyis kyi so mtshams nas / dgra sdang 'dul ba'i sgra bla brngan / lha ri gtsang chab yang gong nas / srid pa'i sel gsas dral brgyad brngan / lha ri 'od dkar rtse mo na / shug (= shugs) mgon rdzi'u bcu gsum brngan /

(vi) chas (= byes) kyi mgron lam gong ma nas / chas (= byes) lha mgron yag bcu gsum brngan / khyed srid pa rgyud kyi sgra bla dang / thugs kar lha yi dmag tshogs dang / cang seng wer ma'i dpa' khrom dang / mgon po bya rdang srung ma rnams /

(vii) 'bod ni rnal 'byor bdag gis 'bod / bsten (= brten) ni go dang mtshon la bsten (= brten) / gsol ni g.yag dang lug gi gsol / mchod ni ja dang phud kyis mchod / brngan ni snying dang gtor mas brngan / bsang ni mkhan shug bal bus bsang / sbad ni sdang ba'i dgra la sbad / bcol ni mthu dpung sdong grogs bcol / sdang dgra thul la bar chod sol / ci bsams don rnams 'grub par mdzod /

Like the mountain deities and *sgra-bla*, Ge-khod exhibits the zoomorphism we are already acquainted with in order to conquer all beings unfaithful to religion. Analogies with the liturgies of the *yul-lha* and the pantheon of the spirit-mediums are self-evident:[236]

[236] See *dBal chen ge khod kyi dug phyung tshan dkar dmar spos bcas* (New Collection of Bon *bka' brten*, vol. 122, nos. 81–101), no. 85, lns. 3–5. No author or discoverer is listed in the text. The passage reads: *lha rgod bdud 'dul de / sprul pa khyung du sprul / khams gsum zil gyis gnon / rtsal chen seng ger sprul / rtsal gsum lus la rdzogs / dpa' rngam stag tu sprul / ris bkra shul du tshangs / kho mo 'brang (= 'brong) du sprul / ru zer dbal du 'phro / bdud khams dbang du bsdus / srin khams chams la pha'am / gnon khams rdul du brlog /*.

The wild *lha* Conqueror of Demons (bDud 'dul) manifested as a *khyung* emanation and subjugated the three worlds (*khams-gsum*). He manifested as a very powerful lion and on his body were the perfected *rtsal-gsum* (three powers).[237] He manifested as a completely striped heroic ferocious tiger.[238] He manifested as a wild yak[239] with blinding bright horns. [These four] conquered the country of the *bdud*. They destroyed the country of the *srin*. They annihilated the realm of the blighters.

In the *Ti se'i dkar chag* by dKar-ru grub-dbang (born 1801), there is a myth about a *srid-pa'i sgra-bla* emanating from the miniscule god Ku-byi mang-ske/ke. This ancient deity called Ku-spyi ser-bzhis, is first mentioned in *Pelliot 1038* in conjunction with the ancestry of the first Tibetan king (Karmay 1998: 396). From the wisdom radiance of Ku-byi mang-ske appear Gangs ti-se and mTsho ma-pham who unite to produce Ge-khod (para ii). This account eschews the primitive mythic theme of the mother-lake and father-mountain mating and instead couches their union in the doctrinally correct terminology of the merging of radiant syllables, which embody wisdom and skillful means. In his narrative, the author sets out nine stages in the theogonic chain, reiterating that from the light of Ti-se and Ma-pang g.yu-mtsho an egg appeared, which hatched as Ge-khod before being magically transformed into a *sgra-bla*, in the form of a fierce yak (para iii). Presumably, dKar-ru grub-dbang based his account on a fund of earlier myths but, be that as it may, it does illustrate the nexus that exists in Bon tradition between the pantheon of mountain and lake spirits, the *ge-khod* deities and the *srid-pa'i sgra-bla*.

In the *Ti se'i dkar chag* theogony, the *sgra-bla* wild yak lands on the north side of Ti-se and shakes the world into submission (para iv). The text explains that this is why the old name of 'Bri-ra phug[240] is dBal-chen lha-bab ri, the mountain where the god Ge-khod descended:[241]

(i) Ku-byi mang-ske, the *lha* of miracles, had an effulgent beryl and turquoise complexion. He had a pacific and smiling manner, and sat

[237] Perhaps a metaphor for the mind, body and speech modes.
[238] *Shul-du* is inserted in this line but with no contextual meaning. It may just mean 'next' or 'after that'.
[239] Wild yak here is referred to as *kho-mo 'brong*. *Kho-mo* appears to be a synonym for *'brong*.
[240] Cave located at the monastery of the same name. 'Bri-ra phug is one of four Buddhist monasteries on the outer circuit of Ti-se.
[241] For this tale see nos. 546, ln. 5 to 549, ln. 7.

with one leg extended and one leg folded. He had the thirteen pacific ornaments and the nine characteristics of pacific deities. In his right hand he held a golden *chag-shing*.[242] In his left [hand] he held a bunch of scriptures above his lap. On the form of his body were all the assemblies of miraculous *lha*, which shone brightly like stars. From his mind is the radiance of five colors, his five wisdom blessings.[243]

(ii) On the face of the earth, at the manifestation of the abode of the *dbal*, are both Gangs ti-se, a mountain with the likeness of a crystal *mchod-rten* (*stupa*), and mTsho ma-pang with the likeness of a turquoise mandala. Through skillful means and wisdom, [the radiance of Ku-byi mang-ske descended to the mountain and lake]. At Gangs ti-se, the foundation of the father of great skillful means, the gold-colored yellow syllable *A* circled counterclockwise on the orange *dbal* flame of wisdom with a lotus design. At mTsho-ma-pang, the grace of the mother of wisdom, the coral-colored red syllable *ma* circled clockwise on turquoise blue smoke in the form of a *nor-bu dga' 'khyil*.[244] Both of these syllables melted into light and a white *thig-le* (essence droplet) of wisdom with a red hue appeared. It was as large as a white *la-ba* flower. Also that *thig-le* was transformed into a resplendent jeweled egg the size of the heart[245] of a large wild yak in its prime.

(iii) It descended having nine qualities such as a miraculous appearance and the power of manifestation. How did this happen? It is said that in the beginning, existence was in the space of the *bon-nyid* (ultimate reality) of primordial emptiness. In the second instance, descent came forth through the *lha* of bright light. In the third instance, the emanation was manifested through the light of the mountain and lake. In the fourth instance, the source emerged from a jeweled egg. In the fifth instance, the gap opened itself automatically. In the sixth instance, the manifestation emerged as dBal-chen ge-khod. In the seventh instance, the transformation magically appeared as the *dbal* yak of existence. In the eighth instance, the landing was the descent into the country of Zhang-zhung Bon. In the ninth instance, the arrival came as the *sgra-bla* of crystal Gyer-bon.[246]

[242] A kind of Bon scepter with swastika designs. In this passage, the manner in which Ku-byi holds the *chag-shing* is written as: *brda ston gyi phyag rgyas*. The import of this phrase is not very clear.

[243] The five wisdoms are: *stong-nyid ye-shes* (wisdom of the knowledge of the emptiness of all phenomena), 2) *me-long ye-shes* (wisdom of knowing the character of all phenomena), 3) *mnyam-nyid ye-shes* (wisdom of impartiality), 4) *sor-rtogs ye-shes* (wisdom of discrimination), and 5) *bya-grub ye-shes* (wisdom activity of accomplishment).

[244] Symbol of good auspices in the form of three spirals arrayed across a disc.

[245] *Tsirta*. A word said to be derived from the Zhang-zhung language, which corresponds with the Sanskrit *citta* (physical center of body).

[246] Bon religion and practitioners.

(iv) How did this happen? Behind Gangs-ri chen-po (Great Snow Mountain) is the mountain called dBal-chen lha-bab (Great Wrathful God Descended). On this support, the black *dbal* mountain, which has the likeness of an angry *srin-po*, landed [the *sgra-bla* yak]. At that time, the earth quaked in six different ways and the mountains also shook in six different ways. The swirling ocean was also upset. In the sky there was a bright light and in space melodious sounds. On the earth there were beautiful flowers and many other wonderful occurrences. At that time, the rock formations on the summit of the mountain fell down. On the horns of the *dbal* yak were sparking thunderbolts, and with the tips of his horns he took these rocks and threw them to the right and left.

(v) There are many auspicious signs such as horn-prints and hoof-prints on the thrown rocks. Nowadays, the mountain dBal-chen lha-bab is the mountain of 'Bri-ra phug. Also, the secret cave dBal la-thim me-ri phug is called 'Bri-ra phug. Moreover, the great *dbal* wild yak of existence became light and dissolved into Gangs-ri chen-po.

Transliteration of the Ti se'i dkar chag *excerpt*

(i) rdzu 'phrul gyi lha ku byi mang ske / bai' dhur (= dhurya) g.yu 'od kyi mdog can / zhi 'dzum bzhad pa'i tshul gyi (= gyis) brkyang bskum du bzhugs pa / zhi rgyan bcu gsum tshangs pa'i tshul dgu dang ldan zhing / phyag g.yas pa'i (= pas) brda ston gyi phyag rgya'i (= rgyas) gser gyi chag shing 'dzin pa / g.yon pa'i (= pas) mnyam bzhag gleg (= glegs) bam po ti 'dzin pa / de'i sku lus kyi phung po la rdzu 'phrul gyi lha tshogs thams cad skar ltar du bkra ba / de'i thugs las 'od zer kha dog lnga ldan ye shes lnga yi thugs rje dang ldan pa zhig /

(ii) dog gdal ba sprul pa dbal gyi zhing zhes bya ba / gangs ti se shel gyi mchod rten lta bu'i ri dang / mtsho ma pang g.yu yi ma 'dal lta bu gnyis la thabs shes kyi tshul du babs pa la / de yang gangs ti se la thabs chen yab kyi kun gzhi / ye shes dbal gyi me ri dmar ser padma ris g.yas su 'khor ba la / yi ge A ser po gser gyi mdog can dang / mtsho ma pang la shes rab yum gyi thugs rje / g.yu yi dud pa sngon po nor bu dga' 'khyil ris su g.yon du 'khor ba la / yi ge ma dmar mo byi ru'i mdog can sogs gnyis 'od du zhu (= bzhu) ba la / ye shes kyi thig le dkar la dmar po'i mdangs chags pa / me tog la ba dkar po'i tshad tsam du gyur / de yang thig le te rin po che 'od kyi sgong nga 'brong chen dar ma'i tsirta tsam du gyur te /

(iii) rdzu 'phrul dang sprul pa sogs yon tan dgu ldan gyi sgo nas kyang babs so / di ci ltar na'ang / dang po srid pa ni ye nyid stong pa bon nyid kyi klong nas srid / gnyis pa grol ba ni 'od gsal lha yi rgyu las grol / gsum pa sprul pa ni gangs dang mtsho yi 'od las sprul / bzhi pa byung khungs ni rin po che'i sgong nga ru byung / lnga pa brdol ba ni rang gis rang bzhin du brdol rug pa byung ba ni sprul pa dbal chen ge khod du byung / bdun pa brdzu ba ni srid pa'i dbal g.yag dkar po brdzus / brgyad pa babs pa ni zhang zhung bon gyi yul du bab / dgu pa byon pa ni shel gyer bon gyi sgra bla ru byon pa'o / zhes so /

(iv) de ci ltar na'ang / gangs ri chen po de'i rgyab tu dbal chen lha babs ri zhes bya ba / dbal ri nag po srin po khros pa lta bu'i ri la rten te babs pa la / de'i dus su'ang sa yang rnam pa drug tu g.yos / ri yang rnam pa drug du (= tu) 'gul / rgya mtsho 'khyil ba yang 'chol zhing / nam mkha' la gsal ba'i 'od dang bar snang la snyan pa'i sgra dang / sa gzhi la mdzes pa'i me tog sogs ngo mtshar du ma dang ldan to / de'i dus su ri yi rtse mo'i brag ri rnams mar la g.yos pa'i / dbal g.yag gi rwa la thog rgod kyi tsha tsha 'khrug cing / brag ri rnams rwa yi rtse mor blangs te g.yas g.yon du 'phangs ba'i (= pas) /

(v) brag 'phang (= phangs) ba'i (= pa'i) rwa rjes dang zhabs rjes sogs bkra shis pa'i rtags mang du yod pa la / da lta yang ri la dbal chen lha bab ri dang / 'bri ra phug gi ri de yin / gsang phug la yang dbal la thim me ri phug ces grags so / 'bri ra phug yin / de yang srid pa'i dbal 'brong chen po yang 'od zer du lhag ste / gangs ri chen po la thim mo /

PART FIVE: BON LITERARY REFERENCES TO THE RITUAL IMPLEMENTS AND PRACTICES OF THE SPIRIT-MEDIUMS

i) *Flat-bell* (gshang)

Along with the drum, the *gshang* is the most important implement used by the spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet. In Bon literature there is a text called *gshang-rabs* (story of the origin and lineage of the *gshang*) that records the legendary associations of the musical instrument, as well as its ritual functions. This work affirms the pre-Imperial origins of the *gshang*. Entitled *The Origin Story of the gShang that Defeats Apostates*, the text stresses the apotropaic and healing utilities of the instrument.[1] As we have seen, these are the two key qualities of the *gshang* as attested by the *lha-pa*. In a like manner to the spirit-mediums, the text relates that this magical implement defeats the various classes of demons and ambivalent spirits believed to cause illness and other types of misfortune.

The Origin Story of the gShang that Defeats Apostates begins with an obeisance for the Bon *yi-dam* dBal-chen stag-la, and an affirmation that the *gshang* was used by gShen-rab himself for the subjugation of harmful spirits (para i).[2] The text goes on to describe how the *gshang* was used by two of Bon's most important goddesses as well as the great master of Zhang-zhung, sTong-rgyung mthu-chen, to conquer the harmful spirits and enemies of the religion (paras ii–iii). The various methods of playing the *gshang* to defeat enemies and facilitate religious practice are then described (para iv). The playing

[1] The full name of this text is *gShang rab (= rabs) dun rtse zil gnon bzhugs pa'i dbu yi gzigs phyogs yod pa lags*. According to the text, "The secret *mkha' 'gro* reincarnation Drung-mu mu-tri wer-lo received it as an oral transmission in the Fire Snake Year." (see last two lines of transliteration). It is located in the volume *Khro bo ngo mtshar rgyas bzlog* (New Collection of Bon *bka' brten*, vol. 5), nos. 55–59. The text is also found in the volume entitled *sDe brgyad bzlog mdos* (New Collection of Bon *bka' brten* vol. 27, nos. 828, 829). A variant of the *gshang-rabs* is found in the *sTag la sgrub pa* volume (New Collection of Bon *bka' brten*, vol. 143, nos. 597–599).

[2] The manufacture of *gshang* is based on sophisticated copper alloys and casting techniques, which are not likely to have been developed in Tibet before the middle or late First Millennium BC, at the earliest.

styles noted in the text are also used by the spirit-mediums. In the concluding paragraph of the *gshang-rabs*, the benefits of playing this ancient instrument are expounded upon (para v). The evil-destroying, blessing-bestowing functions of the *gshang* enumerated in the text echo the tradition of usage found in the healing rites of the *lha-pa*:

(i) Prostrations to the form of dBal-chen stag-la for defeating the apostates[3] and vow-breakers. Now, appertaining to the Srid-rgyal Bon,[4] the *gshang* that conquers the demonic enemies of the Doctrine will be instructed. To begin with, the sound of the ringing *gshang* is expressed as follows. In ancient times, the hand of the primordial sTon-pa gshen-rab mi-bo-che rang[5] the great *gshang* to defeat the *bdud, srin* and *log-lta* (heretics). At this time [I], the *gshen* practitioner, have taken into my hand [the *gshang*] whose *phywa* and *g.yang*[6] does not decline. By ringing it three times the *bdud* and *srin* are subdued. The time has come for the secret conqueror of the *bdud.*[7]

(ii) In ancient times, the only mother Srid-pa'i rgyal-mo rang the shining, divinely empowered great *gshang* to suppress the oath-breakers and enemies[8] of the [Bon] doctrine. At this time [I], the *gshen* practitioner, have taken into my hand [the *gshang*] whose *phywa* and *g.yang* does not decline. By ringing it three times the enemies of the [Bon] doctrine are subdued. The time has come to conquer the enemies of the [Bon] doctrine. In ancient times, sTong-rgyung mthu-chen of Zhang-zhung rang the great *gshang* with the thundering voice of the dragon to defeat the black apostates. At this time [I], the *gshen* practitioner, have taken into my hand [the *gshang*] whose *phywa* and *g.yang* does not decline. By ringing it three times the apostates are subdued. The time has come to conquer the Bon-po apostates.

[3] *Dun-tse/dun-rtse.* This denotes heretics, defectors, the recreant, etc. This word is probably of Zhang-zhung origin.
[4] Shows that Bon is under the auspices of Srid-pa'i rGyal-mo (Queen of Existence), the most important protectress in the Bon religion. For a review of this deity see Tenzin Namdak 1995, p. 155. For her description and activities derived from the text *Srid rgyal dre'u dmar mo'i rgyud* see Kvaerne 1995, pp. 107, 108; also Part Three, section iii, pp. 228, 229.
[5] The verb *bkrol-ba* is used to describe musical instruments played with a swinging motion. In addition to the *gshang*, it is used for the *ḍa-ma-ru, sbub-chol* (cymbals) and *dril-bu* (bells).
[6] *Phywa* is the general state or basis of good fortune and *g.yang* is the capability or fortune potential of individuals and sacred objects.
[7] Epithet of the *gshang*.
[8] *Ru-tra.* These enemies of Bon could be both people and spirits that harm living beings.

(iii) In ancient times, the goddess Thugs-rje byams-ma[9] rang the *gshang* that conquers the obstructers and [insured] the victory of the gods. All the enemies and obstructers[10] were defeated. At this time [I], the *gshen* practitioner, have taken into my hand [the *gshang*] whose *phywa* and *g.yang* does not decline. By ringing it three times the apostates are subdued.[11] The time has come to conquer the Bon-po apostates. By ringing it three times the orders of *bgegs* are subdued. The time has come to conquer the enemies and obstructers. In ancient times, dBal-chen gsang-ba mthu-chen[12] rang the great *gshang* to subdue the *bdud* and *sri* that threatened Bon, and the *bdud* that threatened Bon, and the *sri* that threatened the *gshen* were defeated. At this time [I], the *gshen* practitioner, have taken into my hand [the *gshang*] whose *phywa* and *g.yang* does not decline. By ringing it once the *sri* [that threaten] the *gshen* are subdued. The time has come to conquer the *bdud* and *sri.*

(iv) In ancient times, the *gshang* was a ritual implement of the knowledge-holders. The great *gshang* now in the hands of the *gshen* practitioners have great qualities such as these. The visible upward pointing face of the *gshang* is the upward transformation of Bon and the *gshen.*[13] Accordingly, the time to ring the great *gshang* has come. Ringing it to the right subdues the male demons. Ringing it to the left subdues the female demons. Ringing it straight ahead subdues the minor demons. The drum [and *gshang*] played together subdue the *'dre* and *srin.* [The *gshang*] played with two swings subdues the *dam-sri.*[14] [The *gshang*] played with three swings subdues the demons and obstructers. The striker suspended in the *gshang* is a sign of the purification of the affliction of stuttering and of those who are mute. The silk accessory strap attached to the *gshang* is a realization that all the long streamers needed will be provided.[15] The *gshang* is played like this.

(v) The good qualities of the great *gshang* are such as these. By the blessings of ringing the *gshang* may all obstructers be subdued. May illness, injury and mishap be averted. May hindrances to well being, accidents and pestilence be averted. May all types of misfortune rebound

[9] Loving Mother. Her appearance is described in an invocation of short length translated from the *Kun gsal byams ma chen mo sngags sgrub pa.* See Kvaerne 1995, p. 28.
[10] *bGegs.* These are obstructive forces in general and a special kind of demon that impedes health and well being.
[11] The preceding part of this paragraph is repeated again in the text.
[12] A Zhang-zhung era saint.
[13] This indicates that Bon is spreading and that the *gshen* are becoming more successful.
[14] For a description of this class of demons see Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, pp. 300, 301.
[15] This line of the text epitomizes the wealth-attracting capabilities of the *gshang*.

on the enemy. May the very prized [Bon] doctrine be protected. Accomplish the activities entrusted to you.[16] *Ma ma yag zur zur nam de sho kha hi kha hi.*[17] Thus [the deities] are proffered offerings and signaled. In this manner, *The Origin of the gShang that Defeats Apostates* is for the defeat of foes, obstructers, *bdud* and *srin*.

Transliteration of gShang rabs dun rtse zil gnon *text:*

(i) dun tse nyams pa zil gyis gnon pa'i phyir / dbal chen stag la'i sku la phyag 'tshal lo / da ni srid rgyal bon skor la / ru tra bdud 'dul gyi gshang bstan te / dang po gshang rnams gsung du bsgrag pa de la 'di skad do / sngon ston pa gshen rab mi bo yi / ye srid phyag gis gshang chen bkrol / bdud srin log lta zil gyis gnon / da lta phywa g.yang ma nyams pa / sgrub gshen bdag gis (= gi) phyag tu bab / lan gsum bkrol bas bdud srin 'dul / bdud 'dul gsang ba'i dus la bab /

(ii) sngon ma gcig srid pa'i rgyal mo yi (= yis) / lha dbang zil chen gshang 'di bkrol / dam nyams ru tra zil gyis gnon / da lta phywa g.yang ma nyams pa / sgrub gshen bdag gi phyag tu bab / len (= lan) gsum bkrol ba'i (= bas) ru tra 'dul / ru tra 'dul ba'i dus la bab / sngon zhang zhung stong rgyung mthu chen gyis / 'brug skad sgrogs pa'i gshang chen bkrol / dun tse nag po zil gyis gnon / da lta phya (= phywa) g.yang ma nyams la / sgrub gshen bdag gi phyag tu bab / len (= lan) gsum bkrol bas dun tse 'dul / gyer dun 'dul ba'i dus la bab /

(iii) sngon lha mo thugs rje byams ma yi / lha rgyal bgegs 'dul gshang 'di bkrol / dgra bgegs ma lus zil gyis gnon / da lta phya (= phywa) g.yang ma nyams la / sgrub gshen bdag gi phyag tu bab / len (= lan) gsum bkrol nas dun tse 'dul / gyer dun 'dul ba'i dus la bab / sngon lha mo thugs rje byams ma yi / lha rgyal bgegs 'dul gshang 'di bkrol / dgra bgegs ma lus zil gyis gnon / da lta phywa g.yang ma nyams la / sgrub gshen bdag gi phyag tu bab / lan gsum bkrol bas bgegs rigs 'dul / dgra bgegs 'dul ba'i dus la bab / sngon dbal chen gsang ba mthu chen gyis / bon bdud sri 'dul gshang chen bkrol / bon bdud gshen sri zil gyis gnon / da lta phywa g.yang ma nyams la / sgrub chen bdag gi phyag tu bab / lan gcig bkrol bas gshen sri 'dul / bdud srin 'dul ba'i dus la bab /

(iv) sngon rig 'dzin rnams kyi phyag cha yin / da lta sgrub gshen phyag tu bab / gshang chen yon tan 'di ltar che / gshang zhal yar la gzigs pa ni / bon gshen kha lo gyen la bsgyur / de nas gshang chen bkrol ba'i dus la bab / g.yas su bkrol bas pho gdon 'dul / g.yon du bkrol bas mo gdon 'dul / thad du bkrol bas chung gdon 'dul / rnga dang mnyams bkrol 'dre srin 'dul / gnyis rdung byas pas dam sri 'dul / gsum rdung byas pas gdon bgegs 'dul / gshang la gshang lce btags pa 'di / dig lkug mya ngan sangs pa'i brda / gshang la dar 'phen (= 'phan) sbyar ba yi / lhab lhub dgos 'dod phun sum tshogs / gshang chen bkrol ba de ltar ro /

(v) gshang chen yon tan de ltar che / gshang chen bkrol ba'i byin rlabs kyis / bgegs rnams ma lus 'dul du gsol / nad dang gnod pa rkyen 'gal bzlog / bar chod glo bur dal yam bzlog / mi mthun phyogs rnams dgra la bsgyur / bstan pa gnyen (= gnyan) po srung du gsol / bcol pa'i phrin las grub par mdzod / ma ma yag zur zur nam de sho kha hi kha hi / ces (= zhes) phud 'bul zhing bskul la / de ltar gshang rabs dun tse zil gnon 'di / dgra bgegs bdud srin zil gyis gnon pa'i phyir / gsang ba'i mkha' 'gro'i sprul sku drung mu mu tri wer lo / me sbrul lo la snyan du brgyud pa'o /

ii) *Drum*

The *ḍa-ma-ru* (hand-drum), *rnga-chung* (small drum) and *rnga-chen* (large drum) are regularly used by the spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet to invoke and satisfy deities, and to ward off demons through the agency of sound. These two modes of attracting the good and repulsing the bad are precisely the themes found in literary sources dedicated to the drum. A Bon *cho-rabs* (origin myth) for the drum is found in a *rnga-rabs* (story of the origin and lineage of the drum) entitled *Khro bo raksha spyi 'dul gyi rnga rabs.*[18] According to the text, it was the *dbal* (ancient Bon tantric practitioners) who made the first drum from juniper wood and the skin of wild animals. The use of various wild

[16] Refers to the tutelary deity or protector to whom the ritual is devoted.
[17] Mantra for giving offerings to Śrid-pa'i rgyal-mo and her circle of deities.

[18] See nos. 369, ln. 4 to 370, ln. 5 (New Collection of Bon *bka' brten*, vol. 196, nos. 367–376). No author or finder is recorded.

animal hides as drum-skins is still observed by certain spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet (as well as by some *sngags-pa*). In this *cho-rabs*, the function of the drum is to call the *lha-srin* allies, precisely its function in the tradition of spirit-mediumship:

> They needed a drum as the hand-instrument of the *dbal*. The *dbal* did not have the hand-instrument drum. Where did they search to find the hand-instrument drum? They searched in the center and four directions. In the center of Ri-rab there grew a tree. The tree that grew there was sandalwood-juniper. They cut off a branch from that tree. It is the victorious round disc. It was carved by the ax of method and the hatchet of wisdom. [One side] was covered by the skin of the *khri-snya sha-ra* (black buck). One side was covered by the skin of the *khyung*. It was the well-proportioned round swastika drum. It was tightly sewn by the ligament of the lion. It possessed a miraculous melodious sound. Such a great drum of the *dbal* was beaten, it was beaten from *'og-min* (heaven). Its sound was broadcast from the peak of Ri-rab. It shook the country of the demons. It is the friend that beckons the eight orders of *lha-srin*.

Transliteration of the Khro bo raksha spyi 'dul gyi rnga rabs *excerpt*

dbal gyi phyag cha rnga gcig dgos / dbal gyi phyag cha rnga ma mchis / phyag cha rnga btsal gang du btsal / phyogs bzhi dbus dang lnga ru btsal / ri rab lhun po'i dbus phyogs na / de ru shing gcig skyes pa de / tsadna (= tsandan) shugs pa'i shing cig skyes / de 'dra'i yal ga bcad nas ni / dung dung 'khor lo gnyen po rgyal / thabs shes sta ma stas (= ste'us) bzhog / khri snya sha ras (= ra'i) pags pas g.yog / ngos gcig khyung gi pags pas g.yog / tshad ldan g.yung drung 'khyil bas (= ba'i) rnga / seng ge'i rgyus pa'i (= pas) nan tan drub / rdzu 'phrul dbyangs snyan don dang ldan / de 'dra'i dbal gyi rnga chen 'di / brdung ni 'og min gnas su brdung / grags ni ri rab rtse la grags / bdud kyi zhing khams 'dar shig shig / lha srin sde brgyad 'bod pa'i grogs /

A Bon myth of origin for the drum is also found in the text *Khro bo rnga rabs 'og ma*.[19] The myth begins by stating: "In the primordial epoch of ancient times, the great *gshen* gSang-ba 'dus-pa did not have a drum, the hand instrument of the *dbal* that slays the misguiding

[19] New Collection of Bon *bka' brten*, vol. 5, nos. 41–53. No author or finder is provided. The *cho-rabs* is found between nos. 42, ln. 2 and 47, ln. 3, with other passages interspersed between descriptions of the five drums.

dgra and *bgegs*. He thought in his mind to search for a drum." The account then describes the five drums that gSang-ba 'dus-pa fashioned in the center and cardinal directions:

Central conch realm: a pacific round drum of conch white wood *gram-pa*.[20] He covered it with the skin of a young lion and sewed it with the ligament of a young lioness. He beat it with a brilliant, blazing crystal drumstick. He hung the *rnga-ma* (drum-tail) of the rGu-tshig skya-mo (Milky Way) on it.

Golden realm of the east: an expanding square drum of wrathful golden yellow wood. He covered it with the skin of a young female elephant and sewed it with the ligament of a mother elephant. He beat it with a blazing golden drumstick. He hung the drum-tail of the blazing dragon on it.

Dark blue mountain of the north: a hemispherical drum of dark blue-green wood *gram-po*.[21] He covered it with the skin of a young horse and sewed it with the ligament of a young mare. He beat it with the drumstick of blazing dark blue. He hung the drum-tail of the blazing wheel on it.

Copper realm of the west: a wrathful triangular drum of red copper wood *gram-po*. He covered it with the skin of a great young *khyung* and beat it with the drumstick of blazing bright copper. He hung the drum-tail of the blazing lotus on it.

Turquoise mountain of the south: an immeasurable, miraculous drum of turquoise blue wood *gram-po*. He covered it with the skin of a young turquoise dragon and sewed it with the ligament of an immaculate female dragon. He beat it with the drumstick of bright blazing turquoise. He hung the drum-tail of the blazing jewel on it.

A similar myth of origin involving five drums produced on subsidiary peaks of the world mountain Ri-rab is recorded in another text found in the Bon *bka' brten* collection.[22] However, instead of gSang-ba 'dus-pa, another *gshen* of primordial times, sTag-la me 'bar, is attributed with making the first drum. Again, there were five drums

[20] Rather than a species of wood *gram-pa* seems to describe a quality of wood.

[21] Spelling as in the text.

[22] See *Ma mo sbod (= rbod) gtong snang srid zil gnon las rnga rab (= rabs) thugs dam dbyings bskul* (New Collection of Bon *bka' brten*, vol. 46, nos. 561–567), nos. 563, ln. 1 to 565, ln. 6 (with some lines interpolated between the descriptions of the drum). This Bon *gsar-ma* text was rediscovered by Las 'phro gling-pa at Shel-dkar g.yu-rong.

produced, corresponding with the center and cardinal directions. These drums have the ability to invoke the deities in a variety of ways according to the *'phrin-las* modes of activity:

(i) At that time, sTag-la me 'bar searched for a drum, the hand instrument of the *dbal*, to fulfill the wishes [of the deities] by melodious sound. He went around the rim of Ri-rab lhun-po. On the eastern mountain of conch there grew a great and wonderful tree. This tree was given a name and appellation. It was the tree of medicinal *tsan-dan* (sandalwood). He chopped a branch of the medicinal tree with the sharp cutter ax of the *dbal*. He cut the base and hewed the top symmetrically. It was the white round pacific drum. He covered it with the skin of the white elephant. He beat it with the flexible white cane stick.

(ii) On the northern mountain of gold there grew a great and wonderful tree. This tree was given a name and appellation. It was the tree of *stag-pa* (birch) Kha-le stong 'byams.[23] He chopped a branch of the birch tree with the sharp cutter ax of the *dbal*. He cut the base and hewed the top symmetrically. It was the yellow square expanding drum. He covered it with the skin of the yellow *gyi-ling* (race horse). He beat it with the drumstick of the Mu-le drum tree.[24]

(iii) On the western mountain of copper there grew a great and wonderful tree. This tree was given a name and appellation. It was the red power tree of *seng-ldeng* (acacia). He chopped a branch of the acacia with the sharp cutter ax of the *dbal*. He cut the base and hewed the top symmetrically. It was the hemispherical red drum of power. He covered it with the skin of the dragon, the king of sound. He beat it with the flexible drumstick of southern bamboo.

(iv) On the dark blue southern mountain there grew a great and wonderful tree. This tree was given a name and appellation. It was the savage tree of wrathful black thorns. He chopped a branch of the *tshar-nag* (blackthorn)[25] with the sharp cutter ax of the *dbal*. He cut the base and hewed the top symmetrically. It was the dark blue wrathful triangular drum. He covered it with the skin of a dreadful *bdud*. He beat it with the drumstick of yellow barberry.

(v) On the jewel mountain in the center there grew a great and wonderful tree. This tree was given a name and appellation. It was the

[23] A mythical tree associated with the wish-fulfilling world tree (*dpag-bsam*).
[24] A mythical tree associated with the wish-fulfilling world tree (*dpag-bsam*).
[25] *Coloneaster multiflorus.*

tsan-dan shugs-pa (sandalwood-juniper) tree of continuity (*gyun*). He chopped a branch of the juniper with the sharp cutter ax of the *dbal*. He cut the base and hewed the top symmetrically. It was the octagonal drum of continuity. He covered it with the skin of a white lioness. He beat it with the drumstick of beautiful bamboo cane.

Transliteration of the Ma mo thugs dam dbyings bskul *excerpt*

(i) de tshe stags la me 'bar gyis / sgra bsnyan thugs dam bskul ba'i phyir / phyag cha dbal gyi rnga gcig btsal / ri rab lhun po'i kha khyer 'grim / shar phyogs dung gi ri bo la / ya mtshan che ba'i shing cig skyes / de la ming dang mtshan gsol pa / tsan ldan (= dan) dkar po sman gyi shing / rno gcod dbal gyi sta re yis / sman shing yal ga bcad pa la / rtsa bcad rtse bzhog mnyam par snyams / dkar la zlum pa zhi ba'i rnga / ban glang dkar po'i pags pas g.yog / sba dkar ldem pa'i lcags kyi (= kyis) brdung /

(ii) byang phyogs gser gyi ri bo la / ya mtshan che ba'i shing cig skyes / de la ming dang mtshan gsol pa / kha le stong 'byams stag pa'i shing / rno gcod dbal gyi sta re yis / stag pa'i yal ga bcad pa la / rtsa bcad rtse bzhog mnyam par snyams / ser la gru bzhi rgyas pa'i rnga / gyi gling ser po'i pags pas g.yog / mu le drum shing lcags (= lcag) gis brdung /

(iii) nub phyogs zangs kyi ri bo la / ya mtshan che ba'i shing cig skyes / de la ming dang mtshan gsol pa / seng lding (= ldeng) dmar po dbang gi shing / rno gcod dbal gyi sta re yis / seng lding (= ldeng) yal ga bcad pa la / rtsa bcad rtse bzhog mnyam par snyams / dmar la zla gam dbang gi rnga / sgra rgyal 'brug gi pags pas g.yog / lho snyugs ldem pa'i lcags (= lcag) gis brdung /

(iv) lho phyogs mthing gi ri bo la / ya mtshan che ba'i shing gcig skyes / de la ming dang mtshan gsol pa / tshar nag drag po gdug pa'i shing / rno gcod dbal gyi sta re yis / tshar nag yal ga bcad pa la / rtsa bcad rtse bzhog mnyam par snyams / mthing nag zur gsum drag po'i rnga / ru tra bdud kyi pags pas g.yog / skyer tsher ser po'i lcags (= lcag) gis brdung /

(v) dbus phyogs rin chen ri bo la / ya mtshan che ba'i shing gcig skyes / de la ming dang mtshan gsol pa / tsan dan shugs pa rgyun gyi shing / rno gcod dbal gyi sta re yis / shugs pa'i yal ga bcad pa la / rtsa bcad rtse bzhog mnyam par snyams / zur bzhi

log (= logs) brgyad rgyun gyi rnga / seng ge dkar mo'i pags pas g.yog / sba snyug mdzes pa'i lcags (= lcag) gis brdung /

The spirit-medium's *ḍa-ma-ru* is also a healing implement, and this function reflects the magical character of the drum recorded in the *sTag la me 'bar gyi rnga rabs*.[26] This text was written for use in rituals pertaining to the great Bon protector sTag-la me 'bar; however, it contains much lore relevant to the practice of spirit-mediumship. This *rnga-rabs* begins with the drum as the focal point for metaphors describing the philosophical view of the Bon rDzogs-chen (Great Perfection) tradition (paras i-iv). The passages providing background on this profound spiritual philosophy have some bearing on the *lha-pa*, for some of them are rDzogs-chen practitioners. We learn that the drum, is a model for the fundamental state of being—the unborn fully aware natural state of mind—which is like the infinitude of space.

The text then describes the physical drum and the materials from which it is fabricated (para v, vi). These include drum-skins made from the skins of wild ungulates, a custom with some currency among the spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet. We are informed that the drum conquers enemies, which is the same affirmation made by the spirit-mediums (para vi). It also realizes the desires of the *lha 'dre* (paras vii, ix, xii), a group of primitive spirits that occupy the upper and lower planes respectively of the dichotomous universe. In prevailing lamaist conceptions, they are conceived in dualistic terms of divine *lha* and demonic *'dre*, but that is clearly not the sense portrayed in the *rnga-rabs*. According to legend, in very early times, in the period before weaving and woodworking, when the Tibetans lived in stone huts (*rdo yi khang-bu*), caves and cavities in the ground, the *lha* and *srin* and humans lived in close association (Tenzin Namdak 1997: 15). It is also said that in the beginning Tibet had six successive eras ruled by non-humans, and it was in this period that the *lha, srin* and humans were not separated (*ibid.*: 15). However, as time went on, the kinship between humans and the spirits of the earth and sky diminished:[27]

[26] This text is found in the volume of ritual worship for the Bon protector sTag-la me 'bar entitled *sTag la'i sgrub pa* (New Collection of Bon *bka' brten*, vol. 143, nos. 601–605). The last three lines inform us that this *gter-ma* (revealed text) contains the exoteric, inner and secret aspects of the lineage of the drum, which were taken out of Mount Pom-ra by sPrul-sku kyu-ra'i rnal-byor (see para xiii of transliteration).

[27] See Tenzin Namdak 1997, p. 15: *De 'og bskal par zhang zhung bod dang khams / so sor rim bye mi rnams las rim shes / lha srin sde rnams ri brag chu sogs la / gnas shing dngos su rigs mthun brdzus te skyes / gdos bcas lus min mi las lkog gyur te / mi dang lha 'dre 'bral ba je nyung song / phan tshun mi mthong gnas dang rang bzhin bskal /.*

> In the subsequent era, the territories of Zhang-zhung and Tibet were gradually separated, and humans gradually learned [technological] activities. The orders of the *lha* and *srin* and others resided in the mountains, rocks and rivers, and were continuously born of the same extraction. They did not actually have corporeal forms and were invisible to humans. The humans and *lha 'dre* had less and less association. They could not see each other, and their residences and beings were disassociated.

The *sTag la me 'bar gyi rnga rabs* tells us that the drum is extremely powerful (para viii), and that the celestial variant fulfills the desires of the *yul-lha* and other environment-bound spirits (para ix). Moreover, the drum controls all the unruly spirits of the underworld (para x), a source of disturbance for human beings, according to the spirit-mediums.

In the theogonic sequence of the *rnga-rabs*, it states that the father and mother of the drum are the wood of the *lha* and the herbs of the *sman* (para viii), maintaining the ancient dyadic arrangement of origination pertaining to a sky-father and earth-mother. This kind of lore helps to explain why in divination rites the drum is often thought of as a model of the cosmos, as well as being able to reach beings throughout existence. In the last portion of the text, the drum is portrayed as both an apotropaic device and an instrument that satisfies the Bon protectors and all other sentient beings (paras x–xiii):

> (i) *Kye-ma!*[28] The astonishing and marvelous drum. This unborn[29] drum is itself the wooden drum of the unborn *kun-gzhi* (universal substrate). Covered with the drum-skin of unobstructed[30] awareness, it is struck with the flexible [drumstick] that is both unborn and unobstructed. May I continually fulfill the wishes[31] of the unborn *bon-sku*[32] by the sound of the drum that is neither *nirvana* or *samsara* (*'khor 'das gnyis med*).[33]

[28] Equivalent of *kyai.* A respectful means of calling and greeting deities.

[29] *sKye-ba med-pa.* This also means that the drum was not created, and that its origins cannot be traced to any phenomenon.

[30] *'Gag-med.* This is the state of mind that remains non-reactive, no matter what thoughts and impulses arise in it.

[31] The mode of fulfilling is the successful implementation of the rDzogs-chen practice by the ritualist.

[32] One of the three spiritual bodies or fundamental ontological states known as *sku-gsum*: 1) *bon-sku* (emptiness essence), 2) *rdzogs-sku* (perfection body, luminous nature of mind), and 3) *sprul-sku* (emanation body, the compassionate dynamic of cognition).

[33] Refers to the state of existence that transcends both pleasure and pain.

(ii) *E-ma!*[34] The astonishing and marvelous drum. This wooden drum of the bliss of expansive space is the drum of the Great Perfection. Covered in the drum-skin of the great immersion in the natural state of mind, it is struck with the flexible [drumstick] that is non-striving.[35] May I continually fulfill the wishes of the *rdzogs-sku*, possessing characteristics, by the sound of this drum that is the Great Perfection.

(iii) *E-ma!* The astonishing and marvelous drum. This wooden drum without defilement or hindrance of mental activity is the drum of the *sprul-sku*. Covered in the drum-skin of naturally arising, unobstructed mental activity,[36] it is struck by the flexible [drumstick] that is the arising ornamentation[37] of the entire spectrum of mental activity. May I continually fulfill the wishes of the *sprul-sku* by the sound of this drum that is neither forswearing nor receiving.[38]

(iv) *E-ma!* The astonishing and marvelous drum. This wooden drum whose result is *nirvana* and *samsara*, the fruit that has miraculously sprung up, is covered in the drum-skin of the miraculously arising *sku-gsum* (three bodies). It is struck by the flexible [drumstick] of perfected service to oneself and all others. I fulfill the wishes of Kun-tu bzang-po (All Goodness)[39] by the sound of the drum that is wholly a singular entity.[40]

(v) *E-ma!* The astonishing and marvelous drum. This drum possesses the faculty for the service of living beings. The drum [made of] fragrant wood, covered by the drum-skin of good types of wild ungulates, is struck by flexible cane and bamboo. I fulfill the assembly of pacific *lha* by the glorious and pervasive sound of this drum.

(vi) *E-ma!* The astonishing and marvelous drum. This hand-drum conquers adversaries. The wrathful and wild wooden drum, covered by the skins of dangerous carnivores, is struck by the flexible, savage wild yak [horn]. I fulfill the assembly of terrific *lha* by the fierce and glorious sound of this drum.

[34] Exclamation expressing joy and compassion.
[35] *Bad-rtsol med-pa.* This refers to the non-achieving mind, that does not attempt to restrict its awareness to a particular object or thought.
[36] *Ma 'gag rang-shar.* This denotes the self-arising mind, which exists without external cause or support.
[37] Arising ornamentation (*rgyan-shar*) refers to all mental forms that appear in the mind.
[38] *sPang-blang med-pa.* This is the state of non-discrimination between good and bad, in which the mind ceases to react to what arises in it. It is in this way that the rDzogs-chen view transcends the ordinary understanding of the religious precepts and observances.
[39] The primordial Buddha, the primary deity of rDzogs-chen.
[40] *Thig-le nyag-gcig.* This denotes the wholeness of the unobscured mind.

(vii) *E-ma!* The astonishing and marvelous drum. I fulfill the wishes of the *lha 'dre* of existence. The pliant and elastic wooden drum, covered by a beautiful and good drum-skin, is struck by the flexible [drumstick], which is pliable and easy to handle. May I continually fulfill the wishes of all the *lha 'dre* of existence by the melodious and pleasing sound of this drum.

(viii) *Kye!* Now comes an explanation of the origin of the drum. The venerable father of the drum is the dragon wood of the celestial *lha.* The venerable mother of the drum are the herbs of the only *sman*, mother of the earth. The drum manifested from miraculous warmth and moisture. The drum has respected brothers. One of them resides within the sky. Proclaiming its self-generated, all-diffusing sound, makes the minor *lha* melancholic, all the planets and stars topsy-turvy, and both the sun and moon quake and tremble.

(ix) It is the drum that gladdens the pacific and wrathful enlightened beings. [Its sound] fulfills the wishes of the pacific and wrathful enlightened beings. [Its sound] fulfills the wishes of the oath-holding *dbal-mo*.[41] [Its sound] fulfills the wishes of the *gter-bdag*[42] and Bon protectors. [Its sound] fulfills the wishes of the oath-holding protectors. [Its sound] fulfills the wishes of the *dpal-mgon*[43] and *yul-sa*. [Its sound] fulfills the wishes of the *lha 'dre* of existence. May the desires of the living beings of the six orders be satisfied. Rid the benefactors and sponsors of misfortune.

(x) At present, the smaller brother of the drum stays in the deep sea. Proclaiming its self-generated, all-diffusing sound saddens all the *klu* and *sman*, disturbs and disorders all the otters,[44] and makes the king of the *klu* 'Jog-po shiver and be startled. It is the drum that gladdens the pacific and wrathful enlightened beings. It is the drum that fulfills the wishes of the oath-holders. It is the drum that rids the misfortune caused by the *lha-srin*. It is the drum that satisfies the desires of the six orders of beings.

(xi) My hand drum, the *gshen* practitioner's, is the drum of glorious sound for all. It is the drum with a beautiful and good form. There is no one who does not like the drum that I, the *gshen* practitioner, use. Now, *gshen* practitioner, beat the drum. Beating the drum is for

[41] Various classes of wrathful female deities, including a well-known cosmogonic sisterhood of 27 goddesses.
[42] Literally, 'treasure-owners.' The various types of deities that protect natural resources and other types of wealth.
[43] Minor types of protective deities such as the *lha, gnyan, btsan* and *klu*.
[44] The two types of otters mentioned, *gyur* and *sram*, symbolize the drum's mastery over all aquatic creatures.

the fulfillment of the wishes of the enlightened beings. By praiseworthily beating it the wishes of the assembly of pacific gods are fulfilled.

(xii) By regally beating the drum that fulfills the wishes of the *yi-dam*, the wishes of the assembly of wrathful gods are fulfilled. The drum that calls the Bon protectors to action is beaten with a bouncing motion. By beating with outstretched arms the drum that signals the protectors to action, the wishes of the oath-holding protectors are fulfilled. By beating with full extension the drum that subdues by calling the *lha 'dre* to account, may the desires of the *lha 'dre* be fulfilled

(xiii) *Kye*! Various assemblies of pacific and wrathful tutelary gods please come now to protect us, the *gshen* practitioners. Glorious patron Bon protectors please protect our, the *gshen* practitioners', Doctrine. The haughty assembly of *lha-srin sde-brgyad* guard the learned ones. According to their wishes, let all *rigs-drug* (sentient beings of the six orders) obtain whatever they desire. Thus entrust activities.

Transliteration of sTag la me 'bar gyi rnga rabs

(i) kye ma ya mtshan rmad 'byung rnga / skye ba med pa'i rnga nyid la / kun gzhi skye med rnga shing la / 'gag med rig pa'i rnga g.yog bskon / skye 'gag gnyis med ldem gyis brdung / 'khor 'das gnyis med rnga skad 'di / bon sku skye ba med pa yi / rgyun med * thugs dam bskang gyur cig / * *rGyun-med* is short form of *rgyun-chad med-pa*.

(ii) E ma ya mtshan rmad 'byung rnga / rdzogs pa chen po'i rnga 'di ni / bde chen klong yang (= yangs) rnga shing la / gnyug ma chen po'i rnga g.yog bkon (= bskon) / 'bad rtsol med pa'i ldem gyis brdung / rdzogs pa chen po'i rnga skad 'dis / rdzogs sku mtshan dang ldan pa yi / rgyun med thugs dam bskang gyur cig /

(iii) E ma ya mtshan rmad 'byung rnga / sprul pa chen po'i rnga 'di ni / bkag sgrib med pa'i rnga shing la / ma 'gag rang shar rnga g.yog bskon / sna tshogs rgyan shar ldem gyis brdung / spang blang med pa'i rnga skad 'dis / sprul sku 'gro don mdzad pa yi / rgyun med thugs dam bskang gyur cig /

(iv) E ma ya mtshan rmad 'byung rnga / 'bras bu lhun grub rnga 'di ni / 'bras bu 'khor 'das rnga shing la / sku gsum lhun grub g.yog cig bskon / don gnyis mthar phyin ldem gyi (= gyis) brdung / thig le nyag gcig rnga skad 'dis / kun tu bzang po'i thugs dam bskang /

(v) E ma ya mtshan rmad 'byung rnga / 'gro don thabs ldan phyag rnga 'di / dri bzang shing gi rnga shing la / rig (= rigs) bzang ri dwags g.yog kyi bskon / sba dang bsnyug (= smyug) gi ldem gyis brdung brjid la yang (= yangs) pa'i rnga skad 'dis / zhi ba'i lha tshogs thugs dam bskang /

(vi) E ma ya mtshan rmad 'byung rnga / log 'dren 'dul ba'i phyag rnga 'di / drag po gdug pa'i rnga shing la / gcan zan gdug pa'i pags pas g.yog / drag po 'brong bu'i ldem gyis brdung / gtum la brjid pa'i rnga skad 'dis / drag po'i lha tshogs thugs dam bskang /

(vii) E ma ya mtshan rmad 'byung rnga / snang srid lha 'dre'i thugs dam bskang / mnyen la lcug pa'i rnga shing la / mdzes la legs pa'i g.yog cig bskon / bde la 'khyugs pa'i ldem gyis brdung / snyan la bsdugs (= sdug) pa'i rnga skad 'dis / snang srid lha 'dre thams cad la / rgyun med thugs dam bskang gyur cig /

(viii) kye da ni rnga yi byung khung (= khungs) bshad / rnga 'di yi pha dang yab / 'brug shing de ni gnam gyi lha / rnga 'di yi ma dang yum / rtsi lo sman gcig sa yi yum / drod gsher rdzu 'phrul rnga ru sprul / rnga la sku mched gsum yod pa / gcig de nam mkha'i mthongs su bzhugs / kun la khyab pa'i rang sgra sgrogs / lha phran kun kyang nyams mi dgyes / gza' skar kun kyang 'chol zhing bzhugs / nyi zla gnyis kyang 'dar zhing gsol (= g.yo) /

(ix) bder gshegs zhi khro mnyes pa'i rnga / bder gshegs zhi khro'i thugs dam bskang / dam can dbal mo'i thugs dam bskang / gter bdag bon skyong thugs dam bskang / dam can srung ma'i thugs dam bskang / dpal mgon yul sa'i thugs dam bskang / snang srid lha 'dre'i thugs dam bskang / rigs drug 'dod pas tshim gyur cig / rgyu sbyor yon bdag lan chags bral /

(x) rnga de yi nu bo chung ba de / da lta rgya mtsho'i gting na bzhugs / kun la khyab pa'i rang sgra sgrogs / klu sman kun kyang nyams mi dgyes / 'gyur (= gyur) sram kun kyang 'chol zhing 'khrug / klu rgyal 'jog po 'dar zhing bsngangs / bder gshegs zhi khro mnyes pa'i rnga / dam can thugs dam bskang ba'i rnga / lha srin lan chags bral ba'i rnga / rigs drug 'dod pa tshim pa'i rnga /

(xi) sgrub gshen nga yi phyag rnga 'dis / kun la brjid pa'i rnga skad can / mdzes la legs pa'i rnga gzugs can / sgrub gshen bdag gis

spyod pa yi (= yis) / mi dgyes pa la gcig kyang med / da ni sgrub gshen rnga brdung ngo / bder gshegs thugs dam bskang bas rnga brdung ngo / bstod cing bstod cing brdung ba de / zhi ba'i lha tshogs thugs dam bskang /

(xii) yi dam thugs dam bskang ba'i rnga / brjid cing brjid cing brdung ba de / khro bo'i lha tshogs thugs dam bskang / bon skyong las la bskul ba'i rnga / 'phar zhing 'phar zhing brdung ba de / srung ma las la bskul ba'i rnga / bsring zhing bsring zhing brdung ba de / dam can srung ma'i thugs dam bskang / lha 'dre shags kyis 'dul ba'i rnga / brgyang zhing brgyang zhing brdung ba de / lha 'dre'i 'dod pa bskang gyur cig /

(xiii) Kye da ni yi dam zhi khro'i lha tshogs rnams / sgrub gshen bdag gi mgon la spyon / dpal mgon bon skyong srung ma'i tshogs / sgrub gshen bdag gi bstan pa srung / lha srin sde brgyad dregs pa'i tshogs / yon tan can gyi bya ra mdzod / rigs drug sems can thams cad la / ci 'dod yid bzhin 'phrad 'gyur cig / ces 'phrin las bcol lo / phyi nang gsang gsum rnga rab (= rabs) 'di / sprul sku kyu ra'i rnal 'byor gyis / pom ra'i gter nas thon pa dge'o /

iii) *Conch* (dung-dkar)

Like the *gshang* and drum, the origin of the conch in ritual tradition is ascribed to the pre-Imperial period. In literary Bon also, it is portrayed as an instrument that functions to call deities and to repel harmful beings and influences. In the excerpt of the Bon *dung-rabs*[45] presented below, the use of the conch is said to have begun in the primal epoch. Its application in subduing enemies and demons finds resonance in the ceremonial performances of the *lha-pa,* as does its ability to invoke the full range of environment-bound deities.

The *dung-rabs* excerpt begins with the use of the conch by celestial Bon practitioners for subduing the chthonic *'dre and srin* (para i). During this primal period the conch was used to vanquish powerful demons that confronted the virtuous side of existence (para ii). The splendid form and sound of the conch, and the manner in which it is used to pacify inimical beings, are then detailed (paras iii, iv). Next, the conch is used to glorify the doctrine and adherents of Bon (para iv). The final portion of the *dung-rabs* excerpt describes how the conch fulfills the desires of the indigenous pantheon (para v).

[45] This Bon gSar-ma text is *dPal chen drag po rngam pa'i thugs rgyud las / dung rab (= rabs) sgra rgyal 'brug dbyangs.* It is found in the volume entitled *Mi shig gu drug* (New Collection of Bon *bka' brten,* vol. 62, nos. 75–87; excerpt translated: nos. 78, ln. 5 to 80, ln. 5). It constitutes a *zlog* ritual received by sTang-chen dmu-tsha gyer-med from Slob-dpon Padma (Gu-ru rin-po-che) as an oral transmission.

> (i) *bSo!* In ancient times, in the first epoch, at the rock formation of crystal cave g.Yu-lung, the only father 'Phrul-gshen snang-ldan, the great mother bZang-za ring-btsun, their excellent son 'Chi-med gtsug-phud[46] and, the great *gshen* gSang-ba 'dus-pa[47] conquered the *'dre* and *srin* foes. In order that the stature of the *lha* and *gshen* be elevated, *gtor-ma* and *zlog* (repulsive rituals) of the wrathful *dbal-chen* were made, and *bsrung* (protecting), *bzlog* (averting) and *bsad* (slaughtering) activities were conducted.
>
> (ii) While being involved in these wrathful activities a quarrel erupted between the *lha* and *bdud,* who had [contrary] doctrines.[48] The *bdud* dKar-te yam-pa [afflicting] the *lha,* the *bdud* Yor-po 'gram-ring [afflicting] the *gshen,* the three lTas-ngan (Bad Omen) sinner brothers, and the haughty *sde-brgyad* army, displaying various evil apparitions, ventured against the humans, *smra* and *gshen.* At that time, in order to conquer the haughty *lha-srin,* the powerful and excellent *gshen* masters manifested the *Un-chen*[49] white conch with the great roar from the melodious speech of the *dbal-chen.*[50]
>
> (iii) The body [of the conch] is a bright, light-emitting white color, and is predisposed to purify spiritual defects and defilments. Its snake coils spiraling to the right are a sign that the *lha-srin* of existence have been conquered. Its sharp, suspended wings (the pronounced flange) are [a sign] of covering the extent of the universe by energetic flight.[51] There is an empty cavity in it, [a sign] that by the power of emptiness[52] the activities [of all living beings] are conquered. The fluttering tassels of various types of silk are [a sign] of the power of manifestation [of the deities], which defeat adversaries. Sounding the dragon roar [of the conch] smashes the enemy oath-breakers.

[46] Born of heavenly parents, this incarnation of gShen-rab expounded Bon doctrines. For his activities see Karmay 1972, pp. xxiv, xxv, xx–xxii, 25, 52, 57, 58.
[47] A celestial *gshen.* See Karmay 1972, pp. xxiii–xxv, 52, 56, 58.
[48] Refers to religious vows, observances and traditions that these supernatural beings are thought to possess.
[49] The name of the conch in the Zhang-zhung language?
[50] Corresponds to various tantric deities and practitioners.
[51] This is a rDzogs-chen metaphor illustrating that, regardless of what appears in the mind, its intrinsic nature is unchanged.
[52] *sTong-nyid* (emptiness) is the absolute quality of all phenomena.

(iv) By blowing the wrathful great conch with the fierce roar, the *gshen* masters shook and perturbed the 3000 world systems. The haughty and savage *lha-srin* were rendered senseless, startled and shaken, and their joints were immobilized. By the auditory sign of the great roaring sound, the many armies of the [evil] *lha* were vanquished, and the armies of the haughty *lha-srin* were slaughtered. The evil adversaries of the other side were conquered. The dignity of the *lha, gshen* and people was elevated, and the Swastika Doctrine was further propagated.

(v) According to the ancient tradition, fulfill the wishes of the enlightened assembly of *lha* by the fierce roaring musical sound [of the conch]. Fulfill the wishes of the knowledge-holding *mkha' 'gro*. Fulfill the wishes of the Bon protector *dbal-mo*. Fulfill the wishes of the *dpal-mgon sde-brgyad*.[53] Fulfill the wishes of the *yul-sa* and *yul-sman*.[54] Positively repulse harmful enemies. Destroy the obstructive and injurious enemies who hate us. Perform the activities we have entrusted to you.

Transliteration of Dung rabs sgra rgyal 'brug dbyangs *excerpt*

(i) bso sngon gyi bskal pa dang po la / g.yu lung shel gyi brag phug tu / yab cig 'phrul gshen snang ldan dang / yum chen bzang za ring btsun dang / sras mchog 'chi med gtsug phud dang / gshen chen gsang ba 'dus pa yis / log byed 'dre srin 'dul ba dang / lha gshen dbu 'phang bstod pa'i phyir / dbal chen drag po'i gtor zlog bcas / bsrung bzlog bsad pa'i phrin las mdzod /

(ii) drag po'i las la zhugs pa'i tshe / lha bdud bstan pa rtsod pa'i phyir / lha bdud dkar te yam pa dang / gshen bdud yor po 'gram ring dang / ltas ngan sdig pa spun gsum dang / sde brgyad dregs pa'i dmag dpung gi / mi smra gshen la do ru bsdos / mi mthun cho 'phrul sna tshogs bstan / de tshe gshen rab mthu ldan gyis / lha srin dregs pa 'dul ba'i phyir / dbal chen gsung gi gdung dbyangs la / Un chen dung dkar ngar chen sprul /

(iii) sku mdog dkar gsal 'od du 'phro / bag chags skyon gyi sgrib pa dag / sbrul gcud g.yas su 'khyil ba ni / srid pa'i lha srin dbang bsdud brda / gshog pa dbal du lding pa yi / spyi rgya rlabs kyi (= kyis) gcod pa'i don / khog pa stong par yod pa ni / stong nyid rtsal gyis phrin las 'dul / dar sna'i 'phur ma brlabs pa ni / sprul pa stobs kyi (= kyis) log byed 'dul / ngar skad 'brug tu sgrogs pa ni / byad ma dam nyams klad pa 'gem /

(iv) gshen rab drag po mthu ldan des / ngar grags dbal gyi dung chen bus / stong gsum 'jig rten 'dar dang g.yos / lha srin dregs pa gdug rtsub can / brgyal bsngangs 'dar dang lhu tshig (= tshigs) grum / ngar chen gsung gi brda skad kyi (= kyis) / lha dmag mang po sbran btang ste / lha srin dregs pa'i dmag tshogs bsgral / mi mthun log pa'i phyogs rnams bcoms / lha mi gshen gyi dbu 'phang bstod / g.yung drung bstan pa dar rgyas 'phel /

(v) sngon gyi dpe srol ci bzhin du / ngar grags dbal gi gsungs (= gsung) dbyangs kyi (= kyis) / bder gshegs lha tshogs thugs dam bskang / rig 'dzin mkha' 'gro thugs dam bskang / dbal mo bon skyong thugs dam bskang / dpal mgon sde brgyad thugs dam bskang / yul sa yul sman thugs dam bskang / bzlog cig byad ma gnod byed zlog / sdang dgra gnod bgegs rdul du rlog / bcol ba'i phrin las grub par mdzod /

[53] Same as the *lha-srin sde-brgyad*.
[54] The *yul-sman* are localized female spirits such as the lake deities.

iv) *Mirror* (me-long)

Although the *me-long* (ritual circular metal mirror) is a very significant object used in divination,[55] spirit-mediumship and as an amulet, a text that explains its origins may not exist. The *me-long* is also an attribute of deities, particularly various goddesses such as gNam-mtsho phyug-mo. In the left hand of the great Bon goddess Byams-ma (Loving Mother) a spiraling [golden] *me-long*, the sign of wisdom, rests in an eight-petaled blue poppy (*Ud-dpal*).[56] The capability of the *lha-pa*'s *me-long* to hold or reflect everything in the universe is also a theme known in Bon ritual texts. For example, in another text dedicated to Byams-ma, a *me-long* described as miraculous and

[55] A description of this form of divination is found in Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, pp. 462–463.
[56] See the text *mChog dang thun mong gnyis ka mngon sum du thob par byed pa sbyin pa byams ma dngos grub kun 'byung*, by abbot Nyi-ma bstan 'dzin (born 1813), in the volume entitled *Byams ma stod cha* (New Collection of Bon *bka' brten*, vol. 248, nos. 65–106), no. 73, lns. 2, 3. In her right hand Byams-ma holds a golden vase full of the essence of perfection. The contents realize *thun-mong gi dngos-grub* (capability for the attainment of worldly benefits) and *mchog gi dnos-grub* (capability for the attainment of spiritual wisdom).

showing all things in existence, a swastika made from the five precious substances, and a casket of medicinal nectar are among the articles needed to receive the empowerment of the goddess.[57] This kind of *me-long* is also an attribute of another great Bon mother goddess, Srid-pa'i rgyal-mo. In the first left hand of the six-armed Srid-pa'i rgyal-mo[58] she holds a *me-long* that brightly [reflects] all of existence.[59]

Comparative archaeological evidence indicates that the earliest *me-long* date to the pre-Imperial period, and are related in design to those produced by the Scytho-Siberian cultures of the early and middle First Millennium BC (Bellezza 2002a: 84). Ancient Tibetan *me-long* of the *thog-lcags* class usually have perforated tangs or attachment loops that are integrally molded into the body of the mirror.[60] They also often have a small raised circular area in the center of the mirror. In certain cases these *me-long* were engraved with animals such as fish and wild ungulates, in a style reminiscent of rock art.

v) *Arrow and spear*

The bow, arrow and spear feature in the earliest phase of Upper Tibet rock art, indicating that they have been employed as hunting implements and weapons of war in the region for upwards of 3000 years. The ritual application of the arrow may prove to be just as ancient. In any event, copper alloy trihedral and foliar arrowheads and spearheads, ranging in age from pre-Imperial times to recent centuries, are recovered fairly frequently by farmers, shepherds and pilgrims. The use of the *mda' dar* (festooned arrow) to attract *phywa g.yang*, the realization of good fortune and prosperity, and to serve

[57] See the text *Kun gsal byams ma chen mo'i dbang khrid yid bzhin nor bu'i dbyig bzang 'dod 'jo'i gter chen* in the *Byams ma stod cha* (nos. 811–933), no. 889, lns. 2, 3.

[58] This form of the goddess is the primary protector of the gShen-rab of the three ages: past—gTo-rgyal ye-mkhyen; present—gShen-rab mi-bo-che; and future—Thang-ma me-sgron.

[59] See the text *Srid pa'i rgyal mo nang bdud mo ru sgrub pa'i gzhung dbu phyogs* in the *Bon skyong sgrub skor*, Tibetan Bonpo Monastic Centre, Dolanji (nos. 247–263), no. 257, ln. 3. This text is purported to have been hidden in three parts during the period of the prosecution of Bon under King Khri-srong lde-btsan. According to the colophon, it was derived from the speech of unnamed Zhang-zhung masters, and was used as part of the wrathful religious activities of the practitioner dMu-tsha gyer-med.

[60] Some of these are illustrated in Bellezza 1998.

as the *rten* (support) for deities is one of the cornerstones of the ritual practices of the spirit-mediums. In similar fashion, the *mda' dar* is also used by other types of ritual practitioners who do not act as mouthpieces for divinities.[61] In fact, its application in *g.yang-sgrub* (rites for the propitiation of good fortune) is extremely widespread, particularly in Upper Tibet. These general applications of the arrow are reflected in various Bon texts.

Let us first examine an excerpt from a *gsol-kha* text[62] which describes how the *mda' dar* is to be made so that it can become the body, speech and mind support of the *yul-lha* (paras i, ii). Its construction and function, as detailed in this text, represent the most widespread form of the ritual arrow.[63] In the text, the *me-long* is specifically mentioned as the *thugs kyi rten* (mind support) of the *yul lha* (para ii), precisely the manner in which it is used by the *lha-pa*. The *mda' dar*, along with various livestock offerings, is then used to propitiate the *yul-lha* so that the herds are greatly increased, human and veterinary diseases avoided, and all enemies (human and non-human) subjugated (paras iii, iv). The dual apotropaic and fortune-bestowing functions of the arrow as described in this text, fully parallel the ritual practices of the *lha-pa*, and provide the philosophical basis for its usage. The text also enumerates a series of livestock with the same harm-repelling, fortune-attracting powers as the arrow. This work stresses the augmentation of wealth in terms of livestock generation, which is especially relevant to pastoral Upper Tibet (para iii):

> (i) *Kyai*! We erect the support of the mind for you mighty *yul-lha*. The bamboo with three joints is sought in the forest groves of the south. [The arrow] is adorned with the feathers of the lammergeier. It is decorated with beautifully colored vermilion. Its tip is of a very sharp and hard *gnam-lcags* (celestial iron). On the shaft five types of colored cloths are tied. It is ornamented with decorative hangings of tiger [skin]

[61] For example, the *mda' dar* is used in Bon wedding rituals. See Karmay 1975, pp. 211, 212.

[62] See the text *Yul lha'i bstan (= rten) mdos bzhugs sho* in *gSol kha* (New Collection of Bon bka' *brten*, vol. 87, nos. 1194–1202), nos. 1198 ln. 4 to 1200, ln. 1. No author is given but it is understood by the Bon-po that this text contains ritual practices derived from Zhang-zhung culture.

[63] Na-khi families have a special basket for the *ssu* (*srog-lha*) in which the ancestral arrow with five different colored cloths is placed (Rock 1963b: 146, 147). The *mda' dar* support found in Tibet for the *yul-lha and pho-lha* has a similar function in that these deities are protectors of the *srog* (life-force).

and leopard [skin], and a *me-long*. On it are drawn the eight auspicious articles.[64]

(ii) These [eight auspicious articles] are erected as the body support of the *yul-lha*. We offer and praise the mighty *yul-lha*. The colored cloth [and skin hangings] are erected as the speech support. We offer and praise the mighty *yul-lha*. The *me-long* is installed as the mind support. We offer and praise the mighty *yul-lha*.

(iii) *Kyai*! Now the support that is this caparisoned white yak is offered. I offer you *yul-lha* this support.[65] Increase my male yaks to one thousand or ten thousand. Increase my divine female yaks [who produce] much yogurt to one thousand or ten thousand. I offer you a ram with a white head as a support. Increase my sheep to one thousand or ten thousand. I offer you an orange[66] race horse as support. Increase my horses to one thousand or ten thousand. I offer you a chestnut-colored billy-goat as a support. Increase my goats to one thousand or ten thousand. I offer you *yul-lha*, these various other types of domestic animals as support.

(iv) As I have offered supports like these, do not send human diseases. Carry out my intentions and fulfill my wishes. Avert[67] the witchcraft and sorcery of the enemy. Let human diseases and livestock diseases rebound on the enemy. Let the despicable things and demonic influences rebound on the enemy.

Transliteration of Yul lha'i rten mdos *excerpt*

(i) kyai yul lha gnyen (= gnyan) po khyed rnams la / thugs dam rten du 'dzug pa ni / lho phyogs nag (= nags) tshal gling shad na / snyug ma tshigs gsum de la brtsal / thang dkar rgod kyi sgro'i (= sgro yis) sgron / kha dog mdzes pa'i mtshal gyis brgyan / gnam lcags mde'u mno' (= rno) ngar ldan / mgul du dar mtshon (= tshon) sna lnga btag (= btags) / stag gzig 'phen dang me long brgyan / rin chen bkra shis rdzas brgyad bris /

(ii) de ni yul lha'i sku yi brten (= rten) 'dzug / yul lha gnyan po ngo so bstod / dar tshon gsung gi rten du 'dzug / yul lha gnyan

[64] For a listing see Part Three, section iv, pp. 253 (fn. 242).
[65] The *rten* (support) refers to the animals that are used as the mount of the *yul-lha*, and for their pleasure and possible internal possession. See Part Five, section viii, pp. 466–471.
[66] *Ngang-pa* (goose) describes the color orange in horses.
[67] *bZlog* can also mean to return the provocation to the enemy.

po ngo so bstod / me long thugs kyi rten du 'dzug / yul lha gnyan po ngo so bstod /

(iii) kyai da ni bstan (= rten) du 'bul ba ni / g.yag dkar dar gyis brgyan pa 'di / yul lha khyed la rten du 'bul / g.yag pho stong 'am (= ngam) khri ru spel / lha 'bri zho mang khri ru spel / 'bri mo stang (= stong) ngam khri ru spel / lug pho thod dkar rten du 'bul / lug la stong ngam khri ru spel / gyi ling ngang pa rten du 'bul / sta (= rta) la stong ngam khri ru 'spel / ra po rgya dkar rten du 'bul / ra la stong ngam khri ru spel / gzhan yang g.yung dag sna tshogs 'di / yul lha khyed la rten du 'bul /

(iv) de ltar rten du phul ba yi (= yis) / mi la na tsha ma stang (= gtong) cig / bsam pa bsgrub la re ba bskangs (= skangs) / byed (= byad) dang sbod gtong dgra la bzlog / mi nad phyug (= phyugs) nad dgra la bsgyur / mi mthun gdon tshogs dgra la bsgyur /

Arrows are also a standard offering-component of the *mdos*, elaborate constructions that serve as the temporary support and enticement offering of deities. In one text describing the *mdos* ritual,[68] the arrow functions as a general support for deities, the *yul-lha* among them. However, so highly esteemed is the arrow that it becomes an object fit to offer to enlightened beings. No longer a mere utilitarian instrument, the *mda' dar*, symbol of males, is described using metaphors that elevate its usage to embody the most noble principles of the Bon religion:

> *Kye*! The unbreakable offering arrow of beneficial qualities is cut from fine, flexible bamboo of the southern country by the inside curve of the scythe. It was handed to the divine conqueror of demons. It was meticulously shaved and hewn. The notch fashioned from skillful means and wisdom is the sign of guiding living beings. The *gar-gshog*[69] wild yak tendon it is wrapped in is the sign of defeating the most egregious ignorance. The vermilion and ink decorating it is a sign of the immeasurable concern for the welfare of living beings. The three male

[68] See the text *sPyi rgyug mdos mchod rin chen 'phring ('phreng) ba*, in the volume *sDe brgyad bzlog mdos* (New Collection of Bon *bka' brten*, vol. 27, nos. 807–846), nos. 828, ln. 4 to 829, ln. 2. It represents a summary of other *mdos* sources by gSang 'dus gshen, but it is unclear if this is the proper name of the author or a general title.
[69] 'Strong Wings'? Probably a descriptive term for the wild yak. Uray (1972: 11, 22) notes that the term *sog* (*gshog-pa*, wing) in line 37 of Sad-mar-kar's second song (*Old Tibetan Chronicle*) describes the long hair hanging off the belly of the wild yak.

vulture feathers adorning it is a sign symbolizing [enlightened] body, speech and mind. The erect point of this arrow is a sign of the puncturing the ignorance of pride. Such is the adornment of the arrow. It is ordained for males. It is an important embellishment of the *mdos* of existence. It is a *glud* offering conferred upon this sponsor [of the *mdos*].

Transliteration of sPyi rgyug mdos mchod rin chen 'phreng ba *excerpt*

Kye! ngar ldan mda' bkra'i yon tan ni / lho yul mo bsnyug ldem pa la / rgya zor khug kyis rngas (= brngas) nas ni / lha gdon 'dul gyi phyag tu phul / shin tu phrong phrong bzhog bzhog nas / thabs dang shes rab kha tong (= stang) bston (= btod) / 'gro ba'i kha lo bsgyur ba'i rtags / gar gshog 'brong gi rgyus pas bsis / ma rig tha ma 'jom pa'i rtags / mtshal snag ris su khyer ba ni / 'gro don dpag med byed pa'i rtags / rgod po gsum gyi sgro yis sgron (= bsgron) / sku gsung thugs su mtshon pa'i rtags / de la mde'u btsug pa ni / ma rig gyong 'khing (= khengs) 'bug pa'i rtags / 'di 'dra'i mda' brgyan (= rgyan) ldan pa 'di / skyes pa pho yi bkod du legs / srid pa mdos kyi brgyan (= rgyan) du che / rgyu sbyor 'di yi glud du 'bul /

In a text detailing the construction of a support or tabernacle (*rten*) and the many offerings embellishing it for the god Ge-khod, reference is found to the *mda' dar*.[70] According to Bon tradition, the construction of the Ge-khod *rten* and its various components, such as the *mda' dar*, originated in pre-Imperial Zhang-zhung. The text informs us that the Ge-khod arrow, with its *me-long*, esoteric hangings and precious substances, is carried as a kind of talisman. Its appearance and function, although more elaborate, is not unlike the *mda' dar* wielded by the *lha-pa* of Upper Tibet.

The relevant excerpt begins by describing the outer (spear) and inner (arrow) supports of the *ge-khod* gods (para i). The arrow is decorated with a number of precious articles including dragon-bone (probably from dinosaurs). The arrow is installed in a specially prepared ritual space, with sacrificial cakes and other objects placed around it (para ii). Instructions are then given for the assembly of the two types of secret supports (*gsang-ba'i rten*) for the *ge-khod* gods

[70] See the text *Ge khod gsang ba yang khol* in the first volume (*stod-cha*) of *Ge khod sgrub skor* (New Collection of Bon *bka' brten*, vol. 242, nos. 513–556), nos. 515, ln. 4 to 516, ln. 5. This text was rediscovered by 'Or-sgom at gSang-brag rgya-bo.

(para iii). One of these is a blue sheep horn in which many powerful ingredients are inserted. According to Bon tradition, Zhang-zhung practitioners such as sTong-rgyung mthu-chen and Nang-bzher lod-po used blue sheep in various magic practices. Blue sheep horns are still prized in Upper Tibet, and are installed as supports in the shrines (such as *gsas-mkhar* and *lha-gtsug*) constructed for members of the indigenous pantheon. The other secret support of Ge-khod consists of specially wrapped spells that are hung from the arrow:

(i) The outer, inner and secret support has a series of constituents. The outer support is a long spear on which various types of cloths and different types of grain are hung. White yaks and white goats are installed [at the *rten*]. The inner support is the decorative constituents of the mandala,[71] and the good arrow with the vulture [feathers] on which gold, turquoise, copper, iron, conch, crystal, pig iron, dragon-bone, and *phra-men*[72] are suspended. Silk, tiger-skin, leopard-skin, and a *me-long* are [also] suspended on the vulture [feather] arrow.

(ii) It is erected upon the mandala. Red or white copper in a basin, a very sharp and wrathful *bshos* with three sides decorated with horns[73] and eight smaller [*bshos*] are placed around it, as well as a rounded female *bshos*[74] with five points, a *'brang-rgyas* (a type of *gtor-ma*) a three-sided female *bshos*, and a square [*bshos*]. Offerings of the *rnam-brgyad* [75] and libations are nicely arranged. These are the elements of the inner [support] offerings.

(iii) The [secret support] includes white mustard seeds of *thun*,[76] gold, *ske-tse*,[77] *shang-tse*,[78] copper filings, iron filings, the blood of people who

[71] This is the altar or place of the ritual.
[72] A semi-precious stone of variegated color.
[73] An edible sculpture with protuberances on its top.
[74] *sMan-bshos* are made for Ge-khod's consort Mu-la tsa-med and her circle of deities. In certain instances, it can also denote a *bshos* made of medicinal ingredients.
[75] The eight main offerings of a visual, auditory, olfactory, tactile and taste character. They include: *mar-me* (lamp), *bdud-rtsi-sman* (nectar), *spos* (incense), *rnga gshang dung gling rol-mo* (drum, *gshang*, conch, and flute musical instruments), *gar-dang tshom-tshom* (a kind of ritual dance), *pad-ma'i thod-snod du rin-chen bltam-pa* (jar with lotus designs filled with jewels), *bum-pa tshan gyis bkang-ba* (vase completely filled with lustral liquid), and *me-tog* (flower). See *Thugs kyi yang gab nyi ma'i rgyud* chapter in *bKa' 'gyur sde'i skor* (*Collected Tantras of Bon*, vol. VI, published by Tenzin Namdak, 1972, nos. 1–374), nos. 284–287.
[76] Different kinds of magical weapons including mustard seeds along with white and black pebbles, which are activated with incantations. See Part Five, section vii.
[77] *sKe-tse/ske-tshe* (*Roripa indica*), is used to cure swelling and to subdue demonic obstacles (Pasang Yontan Arya 1998: 14). It is used in *thun* rituals.
[78] *Shang-tse/shang-tshe* (*Descuriana sophia*) is a kind of rape seed grown in Tibet. It is also used to stop hail storms. See Pasang Yontan Arya 1998, p. 263.

suffered violent deaths (*gri-khrag*), and black elephant, black goat and antelope blood, which are placed inside a blue sheep horn wrapped with elastic hide.[79] The [secret] support, which must not be stepped over, is installed [in the mandala]. The various incantations, the spells of the ritual performance, are written in gold and are inserted inside the [dried] hearts of a vulture, white yak and white sheep, which are wrapped in various types of cloth and placed inside a sack of tiger and leopard [skin]. [This sack] is suspended from the arrow on which the *me-long* is hung. At the conclusion of the ritual practice, one carries this oneself. The secret support is held with the utmost care.

Transliteration of the Ge khod gsang ba yang khol *excerpt*

(i) rten pa rdzas kyi rim pa ni / phyi rten nang rten gsang rten ni / phyi ni mdung ring gsol ba ni / 'bru sna dar sna btag (= btags) pa'o / g.yag dkar ra dkar rten du gzugs / nang rten dkyil 'khor rgyan rdzas ni / mda' bzang bya rgod ma la ni / gser g.yu zangs lcags dung shel khro / 'brug rus phra man (= men) btag (= btags) par bya / dar zab stag ras gzig ras btags / mda' bya rgod ma la me long btags /

(ii) dkyil 'khor dag la gzugs bar bya / zangs sam bse yi gshong pa ru / dbal bshos zur gsum rwa'i (= rwa yi) brgyan / de bes (= bas) chung ba brgyad kyis bskor / sman bshos rtse lnga 'brang rgyas dang / sman bshos zur gsum zur bzhi dang / rnam brgyad bdud rtsi mchod pa bshams / de rnams nang gi mchod rdzas so /

(iii) rna ru'i thun snod yung dkar dang / gser dang ske tse shang tse dang / zangs phye lcags phye gri khrag dang / glang rog ra rog btsos (= gtsod) khrag rnams / nang du blug la lhem ge'i (= ge yis) gtum / 'go (= 'gom) yug ma song rten du bzang / bsnyen rdzas (= 'dzab) bsgrub (= sgrub) sngags rnams gser gyi (= gyis) bri / bya rgod g.yag dkar lug dkar snying / nang du bcug la dar snas gtum / stag gzig khug mar bcug nas ni / me long btag pa'i mda' la btag (= btags) / bsgrub (= sgrub) pa thon na rang gis 'chang / gsang ba'i rten yin gces par bzung /

Traditionally the *mdung-dar* (spear with triangular ensign) was used by the *lha-pa* and other residents of Upper Tibet as a support for

[79] *Lhem-ge*. This word appears to be the sTod lexical equivalent of *lhis-ge*, highly supple hides, particularly of musk deer, in the dialect of regions such as sTeng-chen.

their personal deities and the local *yul-lha*. Its origins can probably be traced to pre-Imperial times as it seems to appear as a motif in ancient rock paintings (Bellezza 2001: 201, 319, 320). Whatever role it once had in the trance ceremony has been virtually lost; however, it must have been daunting. In a text extolling the spear of the indigenous deity Brag-btsan dmar-po,[80] the *mdung-dar* is described as a very powerful and formidable implement.[81] As with the arrow of the *ge-khod* gods, the spear of the *btsan* has outer, inner and secret elements:

(i) *Ka!*[82] Elder brother, the great and powerful *btsan* of the rocks, g.Yung-drung thogs-med dgra 'dul rtsal (Swastika Unhindered Enemy Conqueror Prowess),[83] and your father, mother, brothers, wife, sisters, and outer circle of ministers and assistants come here. Stay at this support of oath components. We, the oath-holding yogis propitiate you, oath-holding conqueror of enemies. Accompany us [spear] support for a long time without parting. The spear point with the face of the *srin-mo*[84] is joined to the magnificent awe-inspiring very pointed long spear [shaft]. It is decorated with jewels, red cloth and a piece of [yak] tail. A *bla-rdo* (soul-stone)[85] and *srog gi 'khor* (life-force circle)[86] are placed on it. We erect this support for the circle of oath-holders.

(ii) Today, root-lineage lamas bestow great blessings upon the fierce spear with decorations. Pacific and wrathful tutelary deities grant great empowerments upon it. Mother and sister *mkha' 'gro* highly exalt it. By the Bon protectors may its potency be increased. Circle of oath-holders come here [to this spear]. The body support is the spear point of the foot of the *srin-mo*. The speech support is the red cloth and yak

[80] For a general description of this protective deity see Nebesky-Wojkowitz 1956, pp. 175–176, 251–252.

[81] See the text *bsTan srung brag btsan dmar po'i brten* (= *rten*) *'dzug mdung bstod kyi rim pa*, in *gSol kha* (New Collection of Bon *bka' brten*, vol. 87, nos. 1625–1630), nos. 1625, ln. 5 to 1627, ln. 2. Written by dBal 'bar stag-slag can (born 1832).

[82] Same significance as *kye* (word for calling deities) but with less honorific overtones.

[83] Epithet for Brag-btsan dmar-po.

[84] The face of the *srin-mo* metaphor depicts that the spear head is a wrathful object, as does the foot of the *srin-mo* metaphor in para ii.

[85] A stone which encapsulates the soul of the deity. The *bla-rdo* is customarily the secret or mind support (*rten*) of localized deities. It varies in size from a stone that can be held in the hand, to giant boulders. Like other types of *bla-gnas* (soul enshrining objects), the *bla-rdo* is believed to have originated in the pre-Imperial period.

[86] Usually a magical diagram in which the vitality of the deity is captured. Customarily these diagrams are elaborately wrapped in cloth and thread.

tail. The mind support is the life-force circle and soul-stone. [Brag-btsan dmar-po] steadfastly remain [in the spear support] integrated with your oath.

Transliteration of bTsan srung brag btsan dmar po rten 'dzug *excerpt:*

(i) ka jo bo brag btsan mthu bo che / g.yung drung thog (= thogs) med dgra 'dul rtsal / yab yum mched zla lcam dang sring / bka' blon pho nya yang 'khor bcas / tshur gshegs dam rdzas rten la bzhugs / bdag cag rnal 'byor dam ldan gyis / dgra 'dul dam can sgrub pa la / yun du mi 'bral 'grog (= 'grogs) pa'i rten / brjid pa'i gar mdung zangs (= zang) ring la / srin mo gdong gi mdung rtse sbyar / rnga tshom dar dmar rin chen brgyan / bla rdo srog gi 'khor lo bzhag / dam can 'khor bcas rten du 'dzugs /

(ii) di (de) ring dbal mdung rgyan ldan la / rtsa rgyud bla mas byin chen phob / yi dam zhi khros dbang chen bskur / ma sring mkha' 'gros mnga' chen gsol / bon skyong srung mas mthu rtsal bskyed / dam can 'khor bcas rten chos shig / sku rten mdung rtse srin mo rkang / gsung rten dar dmar rnga tshom dang / thugs rten srog 'khor bla rdo la / gnyis med dam tshig brten par bzhugs /

vi) *Incense and lustration*

Incense and lustration are two mainstays of the ritual healing practices of the spirit-mediums. Other types of religious practitioners also extensively use these two systems of purification for deities, humans and other living creatures. It is generally agreed upon by both Bon-po and Buddhists that the ritual use of special types of smoke and liquids in Tibet dates to very early times. The origins of lustration through smoke and water are touched upon in a text of instructions on how to construct a *rten-mkhar* (support tabernacle) for the god Ge-khod and his eponymous retinue.[87] In this excerpt, containing the *cho-rabs* (origin myth) of trees and herbs,[88] reference to the purifying quality of water and smoke is made.

[87] See the text *Ge khod lha la rten mkhar gzugs* in the first volume of the *Ge khod sgrub skor* (New Collection of Bon *bka' brten*, vol. 242, nos. 357–461), nos. 391, ln. 1 to 392, ln. 2.

[88] For origin myths of incense found in two ritual texts, see Norbu 1995, pp. 109–112.

As with many other Bon etiologic myths, the ultimate origin of all things is a state of pre-existence (*ye-med stong-pa*), which goes on to assume an inchoate form (para i). From this primordial setting the dyadic sky and earth generate the natural world, as embodied by the tree that spreads to all quarters of the world (para i). This world tree gives rise to all types of precious woods that are used for incense, ablutions and sacred constructions (para ii). These in turn were cut by the followers of the first king of Zhang-zhung (para iii):

> (i) In the beginning the primordium was empty without qualities. As existence emerged the primordium acquired qualities. Then both the sky and earth appeared. From both the sky and earth warmth and moisture moved in waves. Through the blessings of both warmth and moisture, the wondrous support, a tree grew. Birch with good foliage sprouted. Turquoise [colored] juniper with good foliage grew up. A multitude of kinds of trees and herbs sprouted. The root penetrated deep into the sea. The canopy reached into the heavens. The silken foliage fluttered. The nectarous sap trickled. The branches spread in the four directions.
>
> (ii) In the east spread the swastika kinds of wood. In the south spread the jeweled kinds of wood. In the west spread the lotus types of wood. In the north spread the orb types of wood. By their smoke the *lha* and *gnyan* are purified.[89] Their foliage is the support of the *lha*. Their sap is the water of ablution. Their trunks are the material of the *rten-mkhar*.
>
> (iii) On account of the fellowship of kinfolk and the army of the *lha*, the people of the Zhang-zhung *khri-sde* (communities/divisions of ten-thousand) cut these trees with their axes and hatchets. They were grasped with white silk as a handling material and handed to the Zhang-zhung [king], lCags kyi bya-ru can (Holder of the Iron Horns of the Bird). By these woods and the ablutions of purificatory water, the *tshan*[90] is sprinkled. By the smoke of *mkhan* incense there is cleansing.

Transliteration of Ge khod lha la rten mkhar *excerpt*

(i) dang po ye med stong pa la / ye yod srid pa cung tsam srid / de la gnam sa gnyis su srid / gnam sa gnyis la drod gsher g.yos /

[89] Smoke is also used medicinally to cure poisoning, gout and uterine disorders (Pasang Yontan Arya 1998: 101).

[90] A series of rites said to have originated in Zhang-zhung, in which lustral water and other ingredients are used to purify deities and people of impurities. The *khrus-chu* of the *lha-pa* is historically and functionally related to the *tshan*. For a description of the various types of *tshan* see Norbu 1995, pp. 112–120.

drod gsher gnyis kyi byin brlabs las / ya mtshan rten shing ljon pa skyes / stag pa lo bzang 'khrungs / g.yu shug lo bzang skyes / shing rtsi sna dgu 'khrungs / rtsa ba rgya mtsho'i gting du zug / rtse mo dgung la reg / lo ma dar du 'phur / khu ba bdud rtsi 'jag (= 'dzag) / yal ga phyogs bzhir rgyas /

(ii) shar du rgyas pa g.yung drung rigs kyi shing / lho ru rgyas pa rin chen rigs kyi shing / nub tu rgyas pa pad ma rigs kyi shing / byang du rgyas pa 'khor lo rigs kyi shing / dud pas lha gnyan tshang (= sangs) / lo ma lha yi rten / khu ba khrus kyi chu / sdong pa rten mkhar rgyu /

(iii) lha dmag gnyen la bsdus pa'i phyir / zhang zhung khri sdeb (= sde'i) mis / shing de sta dang ste'us bcad / dar dkar lcib kyis bzung / zhang zhung lcags kyi bya ru can gyi phyag tu phul / shing de la ting tshan khrus dang tshan gyis btab / mkhan pos dud pas bsang /

The use of fumigation to restore defiled deities is an important feature of various rituals, those of the spirit-mediums being no exception. In a ritual text of purification rites (*tshan*) for the *ge-khod* gods, believed to be of Zhang-zhung origin, the purifying qualities of various types of incense are mentioned in conjunction with the world mountain Ri-rab.[91] In the excerpt presented here, the *ge-khod* gods are called from their celestial castle to partake of the symbolically huge amounts of incense that have been prepared for them (para i). The substances mentioned in the ritual for fumigation, such as juniper, *mkhan* (*artemisia*), sandalwood, *ba-lu* (a fragrant rhododendron), musk, and *A-ka-ru* (*Aquilaria*) are among the most popular types of incense used in Tibet (para ii). In the text the musk deer is stated to be the source of five common varieties of incense (para iii). This animal is described in split verses using the ancient format of a riddle. In the concluding paragraph of the ritual excerpt the purification of the *ge-khod* gods is effected:

[91] See the text *bDud 'dul ge khod kyi bsang dkar* in the first volume of *Ge khod sgrub skor* (New Collection of Bon *bka' brten*, vol. 242, nos. 103–113), nos. 104, ln. 1 to 106, ln. 3. Its authorship is probably attributed to Tshe-dbang rig 'dzin, the son of the Eighth century master Dran-pa nam-mkha'.

(i) Prostrations[92] to the Zhang-zhung-smar lha (3).[93] *bSwo*! The first peak, the second peak, the third peak.[94] In the soaring heights are the three peaks of existence. Higher than the tops of the summits are the soaring turquoise houses in the firmament. From these thunderbolt and hail emitting palaces [come] dBal-chen ge-khod and his retinue. Kindly invite them to come to this place. [Here] there is a mountain, a mountain of incense. There is a plain, a plain of incense. On the far side of this mountain of incense and plain of incense there is a mountain, the jeweled Ri-rab.

(ii) On the east side of this Ri-rab grows the white *ba-lu* wood. Its pure and fragrant smoke cleanses. On the north side of this Ri-rab grows the divine juniper wood with the good foliage. Its pure and fragrant smoke cleanses. On the west side of the Ri-rab grows the red sandalwood wood. Its pure and fragrant smoke cleanses. On the south side of this Ri-rab grows the *bdud-rtsi ljon-phyugs* wood. Its pure and fragrant smoke cleanses. On the four intermediate points of this Ri-rab grows the *mkhan-dkar phud-ma* wood. Its pure and fragrant smoke cleanses.

(iii) In the center of this Ri-rab is a very amazing animal with a small head, thin neck and small body who jumps very far.[95] It has the teeth of a carnivore, the teeth of a tiger. It has the fur of a mountain ungulate, the fur of the deer. It has the speech of a *'tsher-mo*,[96] the speech of a goat. This very amazing creature is caught, caught with the miraculous lasso. It is butchered, butchered with the sword of wisdom. From the carcass of this animal appear five wonderful types of incense: *A-ka-ru, du-ru-ka*, nutmeg, musk, and camphor.

(iv) [All] these incenses are offered to the god Ge-khod. At the base of Ri-rab are *rgya-spos*, meadow incense, rock incense, asphaltum[97] and musk smoke. This smoke cleanses the *ge-khod* gods. This smoke has dissipated into the sky, cleansing the 360 celestial *ge-khod* gods.

Transliteration of bDud 'dul ge khod kyi bsang dkar *excerpt*

(i) Zhang zhung smar gyi lha la phyag 'tshal lo / bswo rtse gcig rtse gnyis rtse dang gsum / srid pa'i rtse gsum bang (= dpang) re mtho

[92] A method for taking refuge in a deity; it helps to wipe out defilements and sins.
[93] Epithet for Ge-khod.
[94] Metaphor for the three spheres of existence.
[95] The musk deer (*gla-ba*).
[96] A female goat who has recently given birth to her first kid.
[97] *Brag-zhun* (melted rock). A mineral exudate found in Tibetan caves. It is used as a tonic and in bone diseases.

/ de ba'i (= bas) mtho ba'i yong gong na / nam mkha' g.yu yi ldeng (lding) khang na / thog ser 'phros pa'i gzhal yas nas / dbal chen ge khod 'khor dang bcas / gnas 'dir spyan 'dren gshegs su gsol / ri cig 'dug pa spos kyi ri / thang gcig 'dug pa spos kyi thang / spos ri spos thang pha rol nas (= na) / ri ni ri rab rin po che /

(ii) ri rab de yi shar phyogs na / shing ni bal lu dkar po skyes / tshangs pa spos kyi dud pas bsang / ri rab de yi byang phyogs na / shing ni lha shug lo bzang skyes / tshangs pa spos kyi dud pas bsang / ri rab de yi nub phyogs na / shing ni tsan dan dmar po skyes / tshangs pa spos kyi dud pas bsang / ri rab de yi lho phyogs na / shing ni bdud rtsi ljon phyugs skyes / tshangs pa spos kyi dud pas bsang / ri rab de yi 'tshoms (= mtshams) bzhi na / shing ni mkhan dkar phur mang skyes / tshangs pa spos kyi dud pas bsang /

(iii) ri rab de yi dbus phyogs na / ya mtshan che ba'i sems can cig / mgo bo chung la mgrin par (= pa) 'phra / lus po chung la 'phyang (= mchong) pa che / so ni gcan zan stag gi so / spu ni ri dwags shwa (= sha) ba'i spu / skad ni 'tsher mo ra yi skad / ya mtshan che bas (= ba'i) sems can de / bzung ni rdzu 'phrul zhags pas bzung / bshas ni ye shes ral gris bshas / sems can de yi khog pa nas / ya mtshan spos sna lnga ru 'byung (= byung) / A ka ru dang du ru ka / 'dza' ti gla rtsi ga phur (= pur) rnams /

(iv) ge khod lha la bsang spos phul / ri rab de yi rtsa ba na / rgya spos spang spos brag spos dang / brag zhun gla rtsi dud pa rnams / ge khod lha la dud pas bsang / dud pa nam mkhar song ba yi / gnam lha ge khod sum brgya drug cu bsang /

In the same text of purification rites for the *ge-khod* gods, the power of the *tshan* to purify all classes of gods is delineated. In this text, grouse feathers are used to sparge the lustral liquids. The *khrus-chu* of the *lha-pa*, employed for the cleansing of many of the same deities as mentioned in this text,[98] is clearly derived from such rites.[99] As

[98] Nos. 110, ln. 6 to 113, ln. 3. The first three paragraphs of my translation were also translated in Norbu 1995, pp. 115, 116. However, the text used in Namkhai Norbu's translation came from the *Zhi khro'i sgrub skor* (Norbu 1995: 262 (fn. 62).

[99] In the practices of the spirit-mediums the *khrus* and *tshan* rituals have become

with the *khrus-chu* of the spirit-mediums, the milk of female yaks and sheep is used in this *tshan* ritual (para i). The text then goes on to describe the sprinkler used to sparge the lustral liquids, and the first individual who carried out this purification ritual (paras i, ii). Khong-ra is like a prototypical figure of the spirit-mediums, in that his purity and integrity are an essential part of the practice. To purify all the deities of existence Khong-ra sprinkled the *tshan* in the three domains of the universe (para iii), mirroring the *khrus-chu* of the spirit-mediums, which is also delivered to deities of the *srid-pa-gsum*. Next, the text specifies the various *ge-khod* (sky-dwelling) and *sman* (earth-dwelling) deities who are to receive the *tshan* (paras iii–v). The excerpt concludes with the *tshan* purification of the environment-bound pantheon (para vi):

> (i) Lustral water is compounded from the ingredients of ewe's milk and female yak[100] milk, as well as various medicinal ingredients. Although we now we have the ingredients for the *tshan*, we don't have the sprinkler for the *tshan*. It is [made from] the divine bird, the grouse, white wool from the back of a sheep's neck, and hair from the tail of a divine white female yak. This is the sprinkler to do the *tshan*.
>
> (ii) Although we now have the *tshan*, we don't have the *phyag-tshang* (officiant) who sprinkles the *tshan*. From where was the officiant who sprinkles the *tshan* found? He was the child of the *lha*, called Khong-ra khong-chung. On his body he wore an upper garment of white silk. Up above, on his upper body, he did not know defilement of heinous crimes or evil blemishes. Down below, on his lower body, he did not know filth or the stain of illicit sex. From his mouth he uttered, "*gtsang so* (may it be purified)! *dag-go* (may it be cleansed)!"
>
> (iii) He was appointed to handle the vase of the *tshan*. This young boy received the vase of the *tshan* in his hand. Up to the sky he exclaimed three times, "may it be purified!" Three times he exclaimed into the intermediate zone. Three times he exclaimed down to earth. Three times, he exclaimed in the four directions. The *tshan* was scattered three times up to the sky, and all the *ge-khod* of the sky were purified.

assimilated. *Khrus* is a Buddhist purification procedure based on a specific deity with the purpose of obtaining a blessing (cf. Karmay 1998: 397).

[100] What is thought to be the Zhang-zhung word for female yak (*zil-mo*) is used in conjunction with the Tibetan term (*'bri*).

(iv) The *yab-bla* (superior father)[101] Zla-shel 'od kyi rgyal po (Effulgent Moon Crystal King)[102] was purified. The mother Nyi-shel 'od kyi rgyal-mo (Effulgent Sun Crystal Queen) was purified. The *yab-bla* dBal-chen ge-khod was purified. The turquoise youth of the firmament were purified. The youth of earth activity were purified. Scattering [the *tshan*] in the center the *yab-bla* Ge-khod dbang-rgyal was purified. The only mother sGra-bla'i rgyal-mo was purified.

(v) Scattering [the *tshan*] to the east, in the intermediate zone, the *lha-gsas* manifestations of the east direction were purified. The 360 *ge-khod* of the east direction were purified. The 990,000 *sman* of the east were purified. Scattering it to the north, the *lha-gsas* manifestations of the north direction were purified. The 360 *ge-khod* of the north direction were purified. The 990,000 *sman* of the north were purified. Scattering it to the west, the *lha-gsas* manifestations of the west direction were purified. The 360 *ge-khod* of the west direction were purified. The 990,000 *sman* of the west were purified. Scattering it to the south, the *lha-gsas* manifestations of the south direction were purified. The 360 *ge-khod* of the south direction were purified. The 990 [,000] *sman* of the south were purified.

(vi) Scattering it down to earth, all the *sa-bdag*, *klu* and *gnyan* were purified. All the *yul-lha* and their brothers and sisters were purified. Scattering it up in the sky, the 360 *ge-khod* of the four directions were purified. The magical Ku-byi mang-ske was purified. The four female manifestations of *ge-khod*[103] were purified. The four young males of the activity *ge-khod*[104] were purified. All the Bon protectors, *yul-lha* and *gzhi-bdag* [were purified]. All the *yul-lha* and *gzhi-bdag* of sTod, sMad and Bar,[105] and all the divine protectors and [deities] that one relies on were purified.

Transliteration of bDud 'dul ge khod kyi bsang dkar *excerpt*

(i) g.yang dkar lug gi 'o ma dang / zil mo 'bri yi 'o ma dang / tshan gyi skyobs su bgyis / sman sna skyobs su bgyis / da tshan la skyobs mchis kyang / tshan la ljags ma mchis / lha bya gong mo'i dang ru g.yas pa dang / g.yang dkar lug gi ze bal dang / lha 'bri dkar mo'i rnga ljags (= ljang) dang / de tshan la ljags du bgyis /

(ii) da tshan la ljags mchis kyang / tshan la phyag tshang ma mchis nas / tshan gyi phyag gtsang gang nas btsal / lha yi khye'u chung khong ra khong chung bya ba de / sku la dar dkar ral ga gsol / ro stod yan chad dme dang khrims (= khram) mi shes / ro smad man chad kyang nal dang rtsog mi shes / zhal nas gtsang so dag go zer /

(iii) da tshan gyi bum pa phyag tu bskos / khye'u chung de (= des) tshan gyi bum pa phyag tu bzhes / tshangs so lan gsum gnam du 'bod / lan gsum bar du (= tu) 'bod / lan gsum sa la 'bod / lan gsum phyogs bzhi kun du 'bod / de lan gsum gnam du gtor / gnam gyi ge khod sum brgya drug cu tshangs /

(iv) yab zla shel 'od kyi rgyal po tshangs / yum nyi shel 'od kyi rgyal mo tshangs / yab bla dbal chen ge khod tshangs / nam mkha' g.yu yi khye'u tshangs / sa gzhi las kyi khye'u chung tshangs / dbus su gtor bas yab bla ge khod dbang rgyal tshangs / yum gcig sgra bla'i rgyal mo tshangs /

(v) bar snang shar du gtor ba yis/ shar phyogs sprul pa'i lha gsas tshangs / shar phyogs ge khod sum brgya drug cu tshangs / shar smad (= sman) dgu khri dgu 'bum tshangs / byang du gtor ba yis / byang phyogs sprul bas (= pa'i) lha gsas tshangs / byangs phyogs ge khod sum brgya drug cu tshangs / byang smad (= sman) dgu khri dgu 'bum tshangs / nub tu gtor ba yis / nub phyogs sprul pa'i lha gsas tshangs / nub phyogs ge khod sum brgya drug cu tshangs / nub smad (= sman) dgu khri dgu 'bum tshangs / lho ru gtor ba yis / lho phyogs ge khod sum brgya drug cu tshangs / lho smad (= sman) dgu brgya dgu cu tshangs /

(vi) sa la gtor ba'i (= bas) / sa bdag klu gnyan kun ka tshangs / yul lha lcam dral kun ka tshangs / gnam du gtor ba yis / phyogs bzhi'i ge khod sum brgya drug cu tshangs / rdzu 'phrul ku byi mang ske tshangs / sprul pa ge khod lcam bzhi tshangs / las kyi ge khod khye'u chung bzhi po tshangs / bon skyongs yul lha gzhi bdag kun / stod smad bar gsum gyi yul lha bzhi bdag kun / rang gi (= gis) brtan (= bsten) pa'i lha srung kun tshangs so /

[101] An ancient title expressing great respect, which is closely related to ther term *yab-lha* (divine father/father god). See Part Two, section i, p. 203 (fn. 104).
[102] The name of one of the *ge-khod* gods, as are all of subsequent deities mentioned in the paragraph.
[103] Three of these goddesses are: Tsha-drag las kyi lcam-mo, Klu-srin nag-mo las kyi lcam-mo and Tshe yi lcam-gcig las kyi yum. See the text *Ge khod gsang ba drag chen ldog med gser gyi spu gri'i gzhung* (New Collection of Bon *bka' brten*, vol. 242, nos. 187–281), nos. 263, ln. 2 to 264, ln. 3.
[104] These are the four *'phrin-las* manifestations of a *ge-khod* deity called Khye'u-chung. See New Collection of Bon *bka' brten*, vol. 242, nos. 270, ln. 6 to 274, ln. 5.
[105] The Upper (Ti-se), Lower (rTse-drug) and Middle (rTa-rgo) regions of Zhang-zhung respectively.

vii) *Magic missiles* (thun)

As we have seen, the spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet routinely use mustard seeds, sand and stones empowered with spells as magic missiles for destroying various types of demons. The use of such magical projectiles can be traced to the *thun,* a Bon ritual practice thought to have originated in Zhang-zhung times. *Thun* entails the use of incantations to create powerful weapons out of seeds, stones, blood, and armaments. Just as in the practices of the spirit-mediums, the various substances of the *thun* are actually thrown at spirit-enemies by the ritualists. The *thun* ritual is detailed in a text instructing in the slaughtering of enemies, which is part of the Ge-khod cycle, entitled *The Concluding Activities of the Jeweled Rosary of Slaughtering Activity.*[106] After various preliminary practices, this text prescribes the throwing of objects such as *tshogs* and arrows at the enemies. This is followed by the *thun* ritual and finally, the destruction of the enemies and their transformation into innocuous entities.

Just like the spirit-mediums, the *thun* use various types of mustard and rape seeds for attacking enemies. Grains of earth and stones are also found in both the ancient ritual and the contemporary practices of the *lha-pa.* These kinds of missiles are considered extremely powerful and effective weapons for eliminating even the most pernicious of demons. The *thun* ritual details the particular kind of substance used by each class of elemental spirit. The deities enumerated (such as the *klu* and *btsan*) in the ritual are precisely the types relied upon by the spirit-mediums:

> (i) *bSwo*! There is the *thun* of white mustard seeds and the *thun* of black mustard seeds. There is the *thun* of *ke-tse* seeds[107] and the *thun* of *shang-tse* seeds.[108] There are the *thun* ingredients of cumin seeds and caraway seeds.[109] There is the *thun* of human blood and the *thun* of horse blood. There is the *thun* of dog blood and the *thun* of the blood of a murdered person. There is the *thun* of grains of earth and the *thun* of pieces of crushed stones. There is the *thun* of *thang-phrom,*[110] *re-ljag*[111] and *ra-dug.*[112]
>
> (ii) White mustard seeds are the *thun* of the male wrathful deities. Black mustard seeds are the *thun* of the female wrathful deities. *Ke-tse* seeds are the *thun* of the messengers. *Shang-tse* seeds are the *thun* of the butchers. *Zi-ra* is the *thun* of the workers. Human blood is the *thun* of the *gshin-rje.* Horse blood is the *thun* of the *bdud.* The blood of murdered people is the *thun* of the *btsan.* Dog blood is the *thun* of the *ma-mo.* Grains of earth are the *thun* of the *sa-bdag.* Crushed stones are the *thun* of the *klu.* Copper filings are the *thun* of the Bon protectors. Iron filings are the *thun* of the weapons.[113] *Thang-phrom, re-ljag* [and *ra-dug*] are the *thun* of the *dmu.*
>
> (iii) Some [deities] have the *thun* of the bow and arrow. Some have the *thun* of the spear and trident. Some have the *thun* of the wheel and *sbar-shad.*[114] Some have the *thun* of the spear and trident. Some have the *thun* of the *phur-bu* (ritual dagger) and *thog* (molten metal thunderbolts). Some have the *thun* of fulminating *dzwo* (magic bombs). [Circle of Ge-khod] receive the mighty ingredients of the *thun.* When casting them at the enemies and obstructers, pulverize their body and viscera. Recite the spells of the *thun* while striking [the enemy].

Transliteration of the thun *excerpt*

(i) bswo nyungs dkar thun dang nyungs nag thun / ke tse thun dang shang tse thun / zi ra kar (= dkar) nag thun rdzas dang / mi khrag thun dang rta khrag thun / khyi khrag thun dang gri khrag thun / sa phye thun dang rdo phye thun / zangs phye thun dang lcags phye thun / thang phrom re ljag ra dug thun /

(ii) nyungs dkar rnams ni khro bo'i thun / nyungs nag rnams ni khro mo'i thun / ke tse rnams ni pho nya'i thun / shang tse rnams ni shan pa'i thun / za (= zi) ra rnams ni las mkhan thun / mi

[106] See *bSad las rin chen 'phreng ba'i smad las bzhugs so* (New Collection of Bon *bka' rten, Ge khod sgrub skor,* vol. 122 (*smad-cha*), nos. 439–453), nos. 450, ln. 4 to 451, ln. 5. No authorship is given in the text.

[107] Usually spelled *ske-tse.*

[108] For a description of *ke-tse* and *shang-tse* see Part Five, section v, p. 443 (fns. 77, 78).

[109] For information on the Tibetan medicinal applications of *zi-ra dkar-po* (*Cumin cymnum*) and *zi-ra nag-po* (*Nigella glandulifera*), see *'Khrung dpe dri med,* pp. 274, 275.

[110] There is a white variety (*Przewalskia tangutica*) indigenous to Upper Tibet, and a black variety (*Anisodus tanguticus*). See *'Khrung dpe dri med,* pp. 274, 275.

[111] *Stellera chamaejasme.* It has many other Tibetan names and is beneficial in infectious diseases. See *'Khrung dpe dri med,* p. 292. In old Tibet, paper was made from its root.

[112] *Aconitum polyanthum.* Its poisonous seeds are used in rheumatic conditions. See *'Khrung dpe dri med,* pp. 244, 245.

[113] Weapons (*mtshon-cha*) here is probably an epithet for the *sgra-bla.*

[114] Weapon resembling eagle claws reputedly used by Zhang-zhung masters. See Bellezza 2001, p. 60.

khrag rnams ni gshin rje'i thun / rta khrag rnams ni bdud kyi thun / gri khrag rnams ni btsan gyi thun / khyi khrag rnmas ni ma mo'i thun / sa phye rnams ni sa bdag thun / rdo phye rnams ni klu yi thun / zangs phye rnams ni bon skyongs thun / lcags phye rnams ni mtshon cha'i thun / thang phrom re ljag dmu yi thun /

(iii) la la mda' dang gzhu yi thun / la la gri dang ral gyu'i (= kyu'i) thun / la la 'khor lo sbar shad thun / la la mdung dang kha tram thun / la la phur bu thog gi thun / la la dzwo dang me dbal thun / thun rdzas gnyen (= gnyan) po 'di bzhes kyis / dgra bgegs gzugs la brab pa'i tshe / lus po nang khrol phye mar thongs / thun sngags brjod la brab bo /

viii) *Fortune-summoning* (g.yang 'gugs)

As we have seen, the evocation of good fortune is one of the primary mediumistic functions of the *lha-pa* of Upper Tibet. Known as *g.yang 'gugs*, this attraction of good fortune is part of the spirit-medium's *lha-gsol* and *klu-gsol*, as well as standing alone as its own ritual performance. *g.Yang* is the potentiality, capability or power for good fortune found in people, animals, deities, and other auspicious objects expressed in terms of good luck, wealth, happiness, and all other positive qualities and conditions. It is commonly thought to exist with a phenomenon known as *phya/phywa*—the undifferentiated capability for good fortune and auspiciousness, which serves as the basis for human sustenance and endeavor (1).[115]

In a text found in the collection of the Bon master Bru-ston rgyal-ba (born 1242), entitled *Whirling Auspiciousness Summoning the g.Yang*, there is a ritual for beckoning multifarious forms of *g.yang*.[116] Rather than actually authoring this text, it is more likely that Bru-ston redacted it from *g.yang 'gugs* rituals already in existence. The text is replete with grand, evocative verses that reflect Tibetan indigenous tradition in all its glory and splendor. The content includes lovely goddesses of the universe, the great clans of Tibet, and charming metaphors derived from the tent. Except for the last two stanzas,

[115] According to *sGra 'grel*, *phywa* means everlasting life (*g.yung-drung gyi tshe*) and *g.yang* is the essence (*bcud*) of life. See Karmay 1998, p. 179 (fn. 31).
[116] The *g.Yang 'gug bkra shis 'khyil ba* is found in a volume of Bru-ston's entitled *gZungs 'dus pod gnyis pa* (mostly contains mantras and recitations) (New Collection of Bon *bka' brten*, vol. 2, nos. 469–479).

the work was composed in lines of seven syllables. According to the Bon view, the *g.yang 'gugs* was part of the corpus of pre-Imperial Bon religious traditions practiced from the remote past. Nevertheless, the four *yi-dam* deities of the cardinal directions and nine *sman-mo* of the *g.yang* (paras i–iii) in Bru-ston's text, belong to the archaic pantheon. These *yi-dam* deities call the ritualists' capability for good fortune using the metaphor of a stake (*phur*) and cord (*thag*) (para i). The nine *g.yang-sman* sisters are each associated with a class of elemental deity, who tend to diverse boons, such as the augmentation of the life-span, livestock, grain reserves, and the prowess of the ritualists. The text and spirit-mediums both agree that the characteristic beings of the *srid-pa-gsum*, the *lha* (upper realm), *gnyan* (intermediate realm) and *klu* (lower realm), are instrumental in the good fortune of human beings and livestock (para ii).

Like the spirit-mediums, the elements of the *g.yang*—the mountain, lake, horses and yaks—are all convoked to circle the material assemblage that accompanies the ritual (para iv). Although this is not specified in the text, the ritual customarily includes food and jewel offerings, *mda' dar*, and various other objects. A *yul-lha* figure of the south also participates in the ritual as the deliverer of the good fortune of wealth (para v). The *g.yang* of the sky, earth, sun and moon (para vi), as well as divine figures of good fortune, are invoked through meditation (para vii) in order that the *phywa* and *g.yang* of the ritualists are increased. The next interval of the text employs the metaphor of a spear festooned with flags and yak hair tassels as representative of the Rus-chen, the four or six great clans of Tibet (para viii). This is not surprising, for in ancient times, the *mdung-dar* was the *rten* (support) of clan protective deities in Upper Tibet. The various types of *g.yang* associated with the clans are preserved for the ritualists' enrichment.

The next section of *Whirling Auspiciousness Summoning the g.Yang* specifies a large variety of *g.yang* types, which the ritualists desire to have bestowed on themselves (para ix). This is followed by the calling of the *g.yang* of four *sgra-bla* in the form of a *khyung*, lion, tiger and lammergeier (para x). These recall the auspicious animals that serve as *g.yang* spirits for the spirit-mediums. Other types of *sgra-bla* are also mentioned (para xi). The text concludes with the consummation of the *g.yang 'gugs* (para xii), which entails reminding the *phywa* and *g.yang* that they must not falter in providing manifold types of good luck. The luck of the *yul-lha* and *gzhi-bdag* is cited, but the final and greatest luck is that of the Buddha/sTon-pa shes-rab:

(i) *Kyai*! Today, the best day of existence.[117] Where does the *g.yang* support originate from? The *g.yang* support is formed from the *gsas* (divinities). In the east is Gar-gsas btsan-po, pulling the *'gying* cord of the *g.yang* of the east. He has erected the white *'gying*[118] stake of conch. Be the keeper of our unalterable *g.yang* support. *Kye*! In the south is gNam-gsas dbyings-rum (Sky gSas Space Womb), who pulls from the south the *'gying* cord of the *g.yang*. He has erected the blue *'gying* stake of turquoise. Be the keeper of our unalterable *g.yang* support. *Kye*! In the west is gSas-rje rmang-po, pulling from the west the *'gying* cord of the *g.yang*. From the west he has erected the *'gying* stake of the *g.yang*. Be the keeper of our unalterable *g.yang* support. *Kye*! In the north is rGod-gsas kham-pa (Bay-Colored Wild gSas), pulling from the north the *'gying* rope of the *g.yang*. From the north he has erected the *'gying* stake of the *g.yang*. Be the keeper of our unalterable *g.yang* support.

(ii) *Kye*! The lake of the *g.yang* is overflowing (*mer re re*). The *sman* of the *g.yang* are singing from afar *lhangs se lhang*.[119] There are nine wealthy *g.yang-sman* mistresses. The eldest is the maiden of the *lha*, the marvelous woman of conch. On her body she wears clothes of gold. In her hands she holds the *gzungs-thag*[120] of long life. Be the keeper of our unalterable long life. The next in descending order is the maiden of the *gnyan*, the marvelous lady of gold. In her hands she holds a halter of silk. Be the keeper of our *gong-bu* (horses). Next in descending order is the maiden of the *klu*, the marvelous lady of turquoise. In her hands she holds a milk-pail of copper. Be the keeper of our female yaks. Next in descending order is the maiden of the *phya*, the marvelous lady of crystal. In her hands she holds a golden silk cord. Be the keeper of our sheep. Next in descending order is the maiden of the *dmu*, the marvelous lady of sky blue. In her hands she holds the *snal-khyu*[121] of gold. Be the keeper of our black yaks.

(iii) Next in descending order is the maiden of the *gtsug*,[122] the effulgent white female of the *gtsug*. In her hands she holds the *bum-pa* of long-life. Be the keeper of our unalterable immortal long life. Next in

[117] *gNam-gong*. The best day—or the 30th day—of the Tibetan lunar month. This line shows that the day the ritual is performed is equivalent to the most auspicious day imaginable.

[118] In this context, the precise meaning of *'gying* is not known. It may designate the special value or greatness of the *g.yang*-bestowing instruments. Alternatively, it could denote a particular type of stake or cord. For instance, *'gying* refers to wooden pins used to bind and pull the plates used in producing walls of rammed earth.

[119] *Lhangs se lhang* conveys a resonating, tremulous sound that comes from afar.

[120] A special type of cord used in long life rituals such as the one that is tied around the neck of a long life *bum-pa* (vase) and conveyed to the ritualists. They blow on this cord thereby transferring mantras to the *bum*-pa.

[121] Nose ring and lead used for cattle.

[122] A type of elemental deity.

descending order is the maiden of the *kal*,[123] the marvelous goddess lady of the *kal*. On her body she wears clothes of white silk. In her hands she holds a key of conch. Be the keeper of our unalterable *mkha' la*.[124] Next in descending order is the maiden of the *gnod-sbyin*, who holds the wish-fulfilling jewel in her hands. Be the keeper of our expanded capability for attainment. Next in descending order is the maiden of the *sa-bdag*, who holds the treasure of the earth in her hands. Be the keeper of our granary.

(iv) Today, nine queen sister *g.yang-sman* also circle our *g.yang* and *g.yang* support. The *g.yang-sman* are singing from afar *lhangs se lhang*. The mountain of *g.yang ldems se ldems*. The lake of the *g.yang-sman mer re re*. The neighing of the divine horses *si li li*.[125] The sound of the female yaks of the *g.yang tse re re*.[126] The grunts of the divine female yaks *di ri ri*.[127] The *'gying* stakes of the *g.yang kyi li li*.[128] Today circle the *g.yang* support components.

(v) *Kye*! White conch man of the east open the eastern portal of conch and preserve in our *phywa* and *g.yang* today, the *g.yang* of the monarch of the east. Holy man *yul-lha*, great *gnyan* of the south, open the southern portal of turquoise and preserve in our *phywa* and *g.yang* today, the wealth of the monarch of the south. The one called the great black *gnyan*[129] of the west open the western portal of agate and preserve in our *phywa* and *g.yang* today, the *srog* (life-force) *g.yang* of the monarch of the west. rGyal-po ldem-thogs of the north open the northern portal of gold and preserve in our *phywa* and *g.yang* today, the wealth *g.yang* of the inexhaustible treasure.

(vi) *Kye*! Today, preserve in our *phywa* and *g.yang*:[130]
The *g.yang* of the father of the lofty sky.
The mother *g.yang* of the bounds of the earth.
The stability *g.yang* of Ri-rab lhun-po.
The brightness *g.yang* of the sun and moon.

[123] An obscure type of elemental deity?

[124] 'In space', which seems to have no contextual meaning. This could be an oblique reference to the *khyung*. With an alternative spelling (*mKha' lha*) this is possibly an obscure type of deity?

[125] *Si li li* depicts a high-pitched or ringing sound.

[126] *Tse re re* depicts a deep resonant sound like the grunt of a yak.

[127] *Di ri ri* in this context is the onomatopoeia for the sound that a yak makes.

[128] *Kyi li li* seems to show that the stakes are arrayed in a circle.

[129] Instead of *gnyan-chen nag-po zer-ba* (called the great black *gnyan*), the proper name gNyan-chen nag-po gel-ba, a wealth deity, might be intended.

[130] In the text, this line precedes each verse in the paragraph.

(vii) *Kyai*! Today, upon summoning by the concentration of meditational immersion, preserve in our *phywa* and *g.yang*:[131]
The power and blessings *g.yang* of Swastika Bon.
The Dharma *g.yang* of the king of India.
The law *g.yang* of China.
The greatness *g.yang* of the Tibetan *spu-rgyal* (kings of ancient Tibet) in the center of the south world.
The arrow *g.yang* of the Mongolian *this-mo*[132] from the tent[133] of amassed armaments of the north.
The hero *g.yang* of the Khrom ge-sar king.[134]
The Bon *g.yang* of the King of Ta-gzig.[135]
The affluence *g.yang* of A-ti mu-wer.[136]
The power *g.yang* of sTag-la me 'bar.

(viii) *Kye*! Taking the spear as a model, the flexible shaft is the sMug-po ldong [clan].[137] Upon summoning by the concentration of meditational immersion, preserve today in our *phywa* and *g.yang*, the hero *g.yang* of the sMug-po ldong. The yellow banner is the Se-khyung dbra [clan]. Upon summoning by the concentration of meditational immersion, preserve today in our *phywa* and *g.yang*, the power *g.yang* of the Se-khyung dbra. The hard iron spear-point is the A-lcags 'gru [clan]. Upon summoning by the concentration of meditational immersion, preserve today in our *phywa* and *g.yang*, the hero *g.yang* of the A-lcags 'gru. The multicolored flag is the dMu-tsha sga [clan]. Upon summoning by the concentration of meditational immersion, preserve today in our *phywa* and *g.yang*, the opulence *g.yang* of the dMu-tsha sga. The red *rnga-thug*[138] is the two [clans] dBal and lDa. Upon summoning by the concentration of meditational immersion, preserve today in our *phywa* and *g.yang*, the affluence *g.yang* of the two dBal and lDa.

(ix) *Kye*! Today, come here in our *phywa* and *g.yang*:[139]
The *g.yang* of sunshine in the middle of the high blue sky.
The *g.yang* of the perfection of the gods of Tshangs-pa (Brahma) and brGya-byin (Indra) and others from the divine palace above.

[131] In the text, this line precedes each verse in the paragraph.
[132] The meaning of this word is not known.
[133] *Gur-khang*. A metaphor for arms standing in a lean-to pile.
[134] Using various secondary sources and numismatic evidence, the possible Eastern Turkestan origins of the Phrom ge-sar king are discussed in Vohra 1995, pp. 215–220.
[135] Another spelling for what is now probably greater Tajikistan.
[136] Probably 'Grandfather Sky King'. An irenic form of the Ge-khod *yi-dam*.
[137] The metrical scheme of the two lines constituting this sentence is faulty.
[138] A kind of hanging decoration attached below the spear point. It is usually made from the hair of a white yak tail that is dyed red or some other color.
[139] In the text, this line precedes each verse in the paragraph.

The possessions *g.yang* of the *klu* dGa' bo and 'Jog-po[140] and others from the palace of the *klu* below.
The prowess *g.yang* of the *gnod-sbyin* rNam-thos sras-chen[141] and others from the interior of Ri-rab lhun-po.
The magnificent lineage of the kings.
The heroic skill *g.yang* of the ministers.
The jewel that grants all desires.
The sagacious knowledge *g.yang* of the scholars.
The learning *g.yang* of the deeds of the queens.
The granting of heroic strength *g.yang* of the heroes.
The sublime qualities of goodness.
The innumerable host of the multiplicity.[142]
The riches of wealth and possessions.
The *g.yang* of a full barley granary and [grain] carpeted fields.
The *g.yang* of livestock unceasingly producing milk.
The *g.yang* of a hardy and swift horse.
The *g.yang* of an expeditious and comfortable road.
The *g.yang* of [good] clothing, ornaments and beauty.
The *g.yang* of a melodious and magnificent voice.
The *g.yang* of available delicious and sweet foods.
The *g.yang* of available soft and supple clothing.
The *g.yang* of the circle of those who carry out all wishes.
The *g.yang* of pleasing wealth close at hand.
The *g.yang* of harmony and good luck at home.
The *g.yang* of an able and adroit scholar.
All auspiciousness and perfection.
May there be the auspiciousness of the unchanging *g.yang*.

(x) *Kye*! The renowned *dung-khyung dkar-mo* (white female conch *khyung*) is on top of the *dpag-bsam* (wish-fulfilling tree).[143] We take for our *khu-ye*[144] *phywa* and *g.yang*, the fame *g.yang* of *dung-khyung dkar-po*.[145] The renowned *g.yu 'brug sngon-po* (blue turquoise dragon) is among both the winds and clouds. We take for our *khu-ye phywa* and *g.yang*, the fame *g.yang* of the turquoise blue dragon. The renowned *dung-seng dkar-po*

[140] Two famous *klu* kings.
[141] The well-known Buddhist wealth deity. See Tucci 1949, pp. 571–577; Nebesky-Wojkowitz, pp. 68–81.
[142] Refers to the good fortune of abundance equivalent to the largest conceivable denomination.
[143] The Buddhist world tree growing on the northeast side of the world-mountain mentioned in cosmological works. Its fruits and boughs produce all sorts of wonderful things. Its roots are in the realm of the demigods and its boughs are in the realm of the gods.
[144] A word for calling or beckoning the *g.yang*. It is believed to be either of Zhang-zhung or *lha-skad* (language of the gods) origin.
[145] It is not clear if this represents an intentional shift in gender.

(white conch lion) is deep within Mount Ti-tse. We take for our *khu-ye phywa* and *g.yang*, the fame *g.yang* of the white conch lion. The renowned *rgya-stag khra-bo* (big striped tiger) is deep within sandalwood forests. We take for our *khu-ye phywa* and *g.yang*, the fame *g.yang* of the big striped tiger. The renowned *thang-dkar* (lammergeier) is deep within the white rock formation. We take for our *khu-ye phywa* and *g.yang*, the fame *g.yang* of the lammergeier. The renowned conch[146] is in the depths of the great ocean. We take for our *khu-ye phywa* and *g.yang*, the fame *g.yang* of the conch.

(xi) *Kye*! We take for our *khu-ye phywa* and *g.yang*:[147]
The *g.yang* of the *sgra-bla* of male heroes.
The *g.yang* of the *sgra-bla* of swift steeds.
The *g.yang* of the *sgra-bla* of impervious armaments.
The *btsan g.yang* of the *btsan-po* (ancient Tibetan kings).
The wealth *g.yang* of rich people.
The learning *g.yang* of scholars.

(xii) The *phywa* as big as a sun is rotating. The *g.yang* as big as a moon is revolving. By calling forth, I invite them here. We take the *g.yang* by waving the flag.[148] We beckon the *g.yang*. Do not disperse. Remain at the support. We beckon the *phywa*. We beckon the *g.yang*. May it be auspicious.

(xiii) *Kye*! May we have the good luck of the root lineage lamas. May we have the good luck of emergent blessings. May we have the good luck of the hosts of *yi-dam* deities. May we have the good luck of the granting of consummation. May we have the good luck of the Bon protectors. May we have the good luck of cleared obstacles. May we have the good luck of the *yul-lha* and *gzhi-bdag*. May we have the good luck of obtaining our needs. May we have the good luck of an unchanging body.[149] May we have the good luck of unobstructed speech.[150] May we have the good luck of a mind without illusion. May we have the good luck of the body, speech and mind of the Victorious One.

Transliteration of the g.Yang 'gug bkra shis 'khyil ba *text*

(i) kyai / de ring srid pa'i gnam gong la / g.yang rten de ni gang nas srid / g.yang gi rten ni gsas las grub / shar phyogs gar gsas

[146] A Zhang-zhung word for conch *Ang-grags* is used in conjunction with *dung*.
[147] This line precedes each of the verses in the paragraph.
[148] Refers to the *g.yang-dar/phywa-dar*, an instrument to summon good fortune, which was once common in Tibet.
[149] *Mi 'gyur sku*. A quality of the Buddha's spiritual body, which is completely stable and not subject to decay.
[150] This means that one's speech is understood by all in effective communication.

btsan po ni / shar phyogs g.yang gi 'gying thag 'then / dung gi 'gying phur dkar po btsugs / g.yang rten mi 'chug rdzi'u mdzod / kye / lho phyogs gnam gsas dbyings rum gyis / lho nas g.yang gi 'gying thag 'then / g.yu yi 'gying phur sngon po btsugs / g.yang rten mi 'chug rdzi'u mdzod / kye nub phyogs gsas rje rmang po ni / nub nas g.yang gi 'gying thag 'then / nub nas g.yang gi 'gying phur btsugs / g.yang rten mi 'chug rdzi'u mdzod / kye / byang phyogs rgod gsas kham pa ni / byang nas g.yang gi 'gying thag 'then / byang nas g.yang gi 'gying phur btsugs / g.yang rten mi 'chug rdzi'u mdzod /

(ii) kye g.yang gi mtsho mo mer re re / g.yang sman rgyang glu lhangs se lhang / g.yang sman phyug mo spun dgu ni / che ba lha yi bu mo ni / dung gi bu (= bud) med ya mtshan can / gser gyi na bza' sku la gsol / phyag na tshe yi gzungs thag bsnams / tshe g.yang mi 'chug rdzi'u mdzod / de 'og gnyan gyi bu mo ste / gser gyi (= bu) bud med ya mtshan can / phyag na dar gyi srab mda' bsnams / gong bu rta yi rdzi'u mdzod / de 'og klu yi bu mo ste / g.yu yi bu mo ya mtshan can / phyag na zangs kyi bzho bzo bsnams / zil dkar 'bri yi rdzi'u mdzod / de 'og phya yi bu mo ste / shel gyi bud med ya mtshan can / phyag na gser gyi dar thag bsnams / g.yang dkar lug gi rdzi'u mdzod / de 'og dmu yi bu mo ste / mthing gi bu (= bud) med ya mtshan can / phyag na gser gyi snal khyu bsnams / rog po g.yag gi rdzi'u mdzod /

(iii) de 'og gtsug gi bu mo ste / gtsug lcam dkar mo 'od 'bar ma / phyag na tshe yi bum pa bsnams / 'chi med tshe yi rdzi'u mdzod / de 'og kal gyi bu mo ste / kal lcam lha mo ya mtshan can / dar dkar na bza' sku la gsol / phyag na dung gi lde mig bsnams / mkha' la (= lha) mi 'chug rdzi'u mdzod / de 'og gnod sbyin bu mo ste / phyag na yid bzhin nor bu bsnams / dngos grub spel ba'i rdzi'u mdzod / de 'og sa bdag bu mo ste / phyag na sa yi gter kha bsnams / bang mdzod 'bru yi rdzi'u mdzod /

(iv) g.yang smin (= sman) rgyal mo spun dgu yang / de ring g.yang rten g.yang la 'khor / g.yang sman rgya (= rgyang) glu lhang (= lhangs) se lhang / g.yang gi ri bo ldems se ldem (= ldems) / g.yang sman mtsho mo mer re re / rta lha'i 'tsher skad si li li / g.yang gi 'bri skad tse re re / lha 'bri ngar skad di ri ri / g.yang gi 'gying phur kyi li li / de ring g.yang cha rdzas la 'khor /

(v) kye / shar phyogs dung mi dkar po des / shar phyogs dung gi sgo phyes la / shar phyogs rgyal po'i rma g.yang de / de ring phywa dang g.yang la skyobs / lho phyogs gnyan chen yul sa'i mi po des / lho phyogs g.yu yi sgo phyes la / lho phyogs rgyal po'i nor g.yang de / de ring phywa dang g.yang la skyobs / nub phyogs gnyan chen nag po zer ba des / nub phyogs mchong gi sgo phyes la / nub phyogs rgyal po'i srog g.yang de / de ring phya (= phywa) dang g.yang la skyobs / byang phyogs rgyal po ldem thogs des / byang phyogs gser gyi sgo phyes la / 'dzad med gter gyi nor g.yang de / de ring phywa dang g.yang la skyobs /

(vi) kye / mthon po dgung gi pha g.yang de / de ring phywa dang g.yang la skyobs* / dog mo sa yi ma g.yang de / *** / ri rab lhun po'i brtan g.yang de / *** / nyi zla gnyis kyi gsal g.yang de / *** /

* Note: this line forms the second line of all four verses in this paragraph and is designated: / *** /.

(vii) kyai / g.yung drung bon gyi mthu byin g.yang / ting 'dzin dmigs pas bkugs nas ni / de ring phywa dang g.yang la skyobs / rgya gar rgyal po'i chos g.yang de / ting 'dzin dmigs pas bkugs nas ni* / de ring phywa dang g.yang du skyobs* / nag po rgya yi khrims g.yang de / lho 'dzam bu gling gi dbus dkyil na / spu rgyal bod kyi che g.yang de / *** / *** / byang mtshon cha spungs pa'i gur khang nas / this mo hor gyi mda' g.yang de / *** / *** / khrom ge sar rgyal po'i dpa' g.yang de / *** / *** / ta gzig rgyal po'i bon g.yang de / *** / *** / A ti mu wer 'phen g.yang de / *** / *** / stag la me 'bar mthu g.yang de / *** / *** /

* Note: these two lines are added to all the verses in this paragraph and are designated: / *** / *** /.

(viii) kye / mdung mo gcig gi dpe slang (= blang) na / mdung gi [shing] ldem pa smug po ldong / smug po ldong gi dpa' g.yang de / ting 'dzin dmigs pas bkugs nas ni / de ring phywa g.yang du skyobs / ba dan ser po se khyung dbra / se khyung dbra yi mthu g.yang de / ting 'dzin dmigs par bkugs nas ni / de ring phywa dang g.yang du skyobs / mdung lcags ngar ma A lcags 'brum (= 'gru) / A lcags 'gru yi dpa' g.yang de / ting 'dzin dmigs pas bkugs nas ni / de ring phywa dang g.yang du skyobs / mdung dar khro bo dmu tsha sga / dmu tsha sga yi 'byor g.yang de / ting 'dzin dmigs pas bkugs nas ni / de ring phywa dang g.yang du skyobs / rnga thug dmar po dbal lda gnyis / dbal lda gnyis kyi 'phan g.yang de / ting 'dzin dmigs pas bkugs nas ni / de ring phywa dang g.yang du skyobs /

(ix) kye / dgung sngon mthon po'i dkyil shad na / nyi ma gsal ba'i g.yang cha de / de ring 'di ru g.yang la byon*/ steng phyogs lha yi pho brang nas / tshangs pa brgya byin la sogs pa'i / lha'i (= lha yi) phun tshogs g.yang cha de /***/ 'og phyogs klu'i (= klu yi) pho brang nas / dga' bo 'jog po la sogs pa'i / klu'i longs spyod g.yang cha de /***/ ri rab lhun po'i khong seng nas / rnam thos sras chen la sogs te / gnod sbyin mthu stobs g.yang cha de /***/ rgyal po rigs sgyur lhun chags de /***/ blon po'i dpa' g.yang dpa' rtsal de /***/ nor bu dgos 'dod kun rtsal de /***/ mkhas pa'i shes rab mkhas g.yang de /***/ btsun mo'i spyod lam mkhas g.yang de /***/ dpa' bo dpa' rtsal g.yang stsol de /***/ bzang po'i yon tan phun tshogs de /***/ mang po'i dpung tshogs grangs med de /***/ phyug po'i longs spyod nor rdzas 'di /***/ yo shing bag 'phen (= bang 'phel) nas kyi g.yang /***/ 'o ma'i rgyud 'dzin phyugs kyi g.yang /***/ mgyogs pa shugs chen rta yi g.yang /***/ bde zhing myur mgyogs lam gyi g.yang / ***/ mdzes zhing (= shing) rgyan cha gos kyi g.yang /***/ snyan zhing lhun chags skad kyi g.yang /***/ zhim mngar 'dzoms pa zas kyi g.yang /***/ 'jam mnyen 'dzoms pa gos kyi g.yang /***/ ci 'dod sgrub pa 'khor gyi g.yang /***/ yid 'ong nye 'khor nor gyi g.yang /***/ mthun zhing skal (= bskal) bzang gzhi yi g.yang /***/ stobs chen myur mgyogs mkhas pa'i g.yang /***/ bkra shis phun sum tshogs pa rnams /***/ g.yang cha mi 'gyur bkra shis shog /

* Note: repeat occurences of this line are designated: /***/

(x) kye / dpag bsam shing gi rtse mo na / dung khyung dkar mo snyan re che / dung khyung dkar po'i snyan g.yang de / khu ye phywa dang g.yang du len* / rlung sprin gnyis kyi so mtshams na / g.yu 'brug sngon po snyan re che / g.yu 'brug sngon po'i snyan g.yang de /***/ ti rtse gangs gyi (= kyi) gting rum na / dung seng dkar po snyan re che / dung seng dkar po'i snyan g.yang de /***/ tsan dan nags kyi gting rum na / rgya stag khro (= khra) bo snyan re che / rgya stag khra bo'i snyan g.yang de /***/ dkar yag brag gi gting rum na / thang dkar rgod po snyan re che / thang dkar rgod po'i snyan g.yang de /***/ rgya mtsho chen po'i gting rum

na / dung gi g.yang (= Ang) grags snyan re che / dung gi Ang grags snyan g.yang de /***/

* Note: repeat occurences of this line are designated: /***/

(xi) kye / mi pho dpa' bo sgra bla'i g.yang / khu ye phywa dang g.yang du len * / rta pho mgyog (= mgyogs) pa sgra bla'i g.yang /***/ go khrab btsan po sgra bla'i g.yang /***/ btsan po rnams kyi btsan g.yang de /***/ phyug po rnams kyi phyug g.yang de /***/ mkhas pa rnams kyi mkhas g.yang de /***/

* Note: repeat occurences of this line are designated: /***/

(xii) phywa nyi ma tsam zhig sga ra ra / phywa khu ye g.yang khu ye bkra shis so / g.yang zla ba tsam zhig kyi li li / 'di na 'bod pa nga yi (= yis) 'bod / g.yang ni g.yab pa dar gyis len / g.yang khu ye ma 'phang rten la bzhugs / phywa khu ye g.yang khu ye bkra shis so /

(xiii) kye rtsa rgyud bla ma'i bkra shis shog / byin rlabs 'byung ba'i bkra shis shog / yi dam lha tshogs rnams kyi bkra shis shog / dngos grub stsol ba'i bkra shis shog / bon skyong srung ma rnams kyi bkra shis shog / bar chad sel ba'i bkra shis shog / yul lha gzhi bdag rnams kyi bkra shis shog / mthun rkyen 'grub pa'i bkra shis shog / mi 'gyur sku yi bkra shis shog / mi 'gag gsung gi bkra shis shog / mi 'khrul thugs kyi bkra shis shog / rgyal ba'i sku gsung thugs kyi bkra shis shog /

We have readily seen, that among the spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet, it is common practice to prescribe the offering of auspiciously colored and marked livestock to the personal and territorial divinities of a client. According to popular belief, these animals win the favor of the deities for harm-destroying and fortune-bestowing purposes.[151] The gifting of livestock is an important part of *g.yang 'gugs, lha-gsol* and *klu-gsol* rituals carried out by the *'brog-pa* of Upper Tibet during the first half of the first lunar month, other special occasions,

[151] The story of a rich man who falls ill and, at the behest of Bon ritualists, sets free a yak for the *pho-lha*, a sheep for the *dgra-lha* and a goat for the *srog-lha* is recounted in the biography of Mi-la ras-pa. See Stein 1972, pp. 238, 239.

and when ordered by religious functionaries such as the *lha-pa* and *sngags-pa*. Such presents are thought to prevent or cure illnesses, insure the well-being of the household, and augment herd size.

The animals to be selected must be healthy, free of physical defects and have well-shaped horns. Customarily, their horns are decorated with red ochre and dabs of butter, and colored strips of cloths and tassels are suspended from their ears, withers and tails. Designs in red ochre are sometimes drawn on the backs of the animals as well. Some *'brog-pa* report that these designs represent the saddle of the deity. Typically, these markings are in a checkerboard pattern, but there are many family and regional variations. There is some indication among well-informed elders that at one time each clan had its own particular ochre design. In La-stod byang-ma (A-zur township, Nyi-ma county), the linear pattern on the right side of the animal symbolizes that this gift subdues all enemies and obstructions, while the curvilinear pattern on the left side symbolizes that the animal will bring happiness and profit to the owner. Once the animal is duly prepared, incense is burnt, and blessed barley grains and water from a sacred spring or lake are sprinkled over it, to the accompaniment of an invocation. A typical invocation runs:[152]

> *bSwo, bswo*! May the piece of wool in the left [hand] be the auspicious and happy aid. May everything be good. *bSwo*! It is the aid of human life. It is the aid of the *nor-g.yang* (capability for increase in livestock). The *khram*[153] in the right [hand] conquers the *shi 'dre* (demons of death). It conquers the *gson 'dre* (demons of life). It conquers all harm.

In some cases, invocations are specifically tailored to the recipient deity. For example, in A-zur township, when the mountain god Pho-lha shel-rgyung is invoked he is called Mi-dkar rta-dkar (White Man White Horse). Once the animal is gifted to the deities it is permitted to lead the rest of its days unmolested. It becomes the *rten*, or physical support, of the deity. The recipient deity accepts the animal as a gift and may use it for riding. In certain instances they are believed to mate with it or take possession by entering the animal.

[152] Recorded in Khyung-tshang township, Nag-tshang (Nyi-ma county): *bswo bswo g.yon bal legs shig legs shig skyor ma / legs shig bswo / mi'i tshe skyor yin / nor g.yang skyor ma yin / g.yas khram yin shi 'dre kha lo khram mo / gson 'dre kha lo khram mo / gnod pa thams cad khram mo /*.

[153] Apparently, this is the *khram-shing*, a board inscribed with crosshatches used in wrathful magical practices.

The traditional scheme of animal offerings in Upper Tibet is as follows:[154]

Pho-lha and *yul-lha*—white male yaks (*lha-g.yag dkar-po, zhol-po*), white sheep (*lha-lug dkar-po, don-po*) and white horses (*lha-rta dkar-po*).

bTsan—bay-colored (*kham-pa*) yaks, red goats and sheep, and white sheep with red faces (*lug-dmar-rtsa*).

mGon-po (for those families who have this class of deity as their *phugs-lha*)—all-black (*rog-po*) yaks and sheep.

Klu-mo and *mo-lha*—bluish female yaks, horses, goats and sheep.

In contiguous Seng 'khor and Rus 'thor, a region with a high proportion of ancient clans, the tradition of gifting specially marked animals to the *rus-lha* (protective clan god) has survived. bTsan kham-nag of the dPon-pa clan receives a sheep with a white head and sorrel-colored body. The 'A-ba clan offers a white sheep with red markings around the mouth and eyes to its unnamed *rus-lha*. A-bse-gro rwa-dkar of the Seng 'khor clan receives a brown sheep with white horns. mGon-btsan of the Gu-rub clan is the recipient of a black sheep with white markings on its head in Ru 'thor, and a generic red *btsan-lug* (sheep of the *btsan*) in Seng 'khor.

In the village of Khyung-lung, in Gu-ge, there was a song extolling an abundant pastoral harvest that was regularly sung until 1959. The few native elders remaining in the village still remember three prominent lines from this song, which include what are probably Zhang-zhung and Tibetan bilingual references to female livestock. In these verses the Zhang-zhung language term precedes the Tibetan.

[154] A precedent for such livestock practices is found in *PT 1060* (*Choix de Documents Tibétains Conservés à la Bibliothèque Nationale Complété par Quelques Manuscrits de L' India Office et du British Museum*, vol. II), lns. 3–34. This text notes that horses which belong to certain classes of deities cannot serve as the *do-ma*, the funerary horse that guides the soul of the deceased to the 'happy land' (*dga' yul*), the paradise where the ancestral deities (*mtshun*) reside. The colorations and markings of these contraindicated horses vary according to the deity to which they are gifted. In their descriptions the word *shu* is often used, referring to an unknown appearance or aspect of a horse. The horses and the deities associated with them are as follows: horse of the *lha*—white *shu*; horse of the *bdud*—black *shu*; *dmu*—*shu-bo* with a white muzzle, and a horse with a chestnut coat and a white muzzle; *dmu'* (same class as *dmu*)—blue horse with a white muzzle; [*lha* of the] stars—white *she'u-rigs/ris* (?); [*lha* of the] rainbow—red *lu-shu* (?) and *shu-bo* with a white muzzle; *srin*—*'ol-ba* (?) with a white muzzle and a black horse with a variegated mane; *gnyan*—blue horse with a light gray tail; *klu*—red horse (*mtshal-bu*) with a white muzzle; *sman*—*shu-mo* with white lower legs in front; [*lha* of the] moon—bright light gray horse; and [*lha* of the] sun—blue *zhung-po* (?).

The dialectal word for female yak is *zil-li*, which appears to be a variant of a word we have already encountered: *zil-mo*.[155] The verses read: "The castle of yellow butter of the *zil-li 'bri-mo* (female yak). The castle of milk of the *tshid-tshid*[156] *ra-ma* (female goat). The castle of wool of the *g.yang-dkar ma'u*."[157]

The invocations set forth for the presentation of animals in the *g.yang 'gugs* ritual are recorded in a text entitled *Erection of the Support and Obtaining the g.Yang of rMa gnyan pom ra*.[158] For translation, I have selected the passages that pertain to the *g.yang* supports. Although this ritual is specifically dedicated to the great *lha-ri* of A-mdo, rMa-chen spom/pom-ra, it is organized in the same manner as *g.yang 'gugs* rituals for other indigenous deities. Festooned male yaks (para i), female yaks (para ii), sheep (para iii) and horses (para iv) of various types are given over as supports to Pom-ra, in exchange for his aid in securing good fortune. The variety of animals that feature in the ritual reflect the broad character of the mountain god's retinue, which includes spirits from each of the realms of the *srid-pa-gsum*. The text also includes the *mdung-dar* and *mda' dar* supports of the *g.yang*. As we have seen, the latter is still a very important *g.yang 'gugs* instrument in Upper Tibet:

> (i) *Kyai!* We erect the *g.yang* support for you [Pom-ra]. The *g.yang* support of the white divine yak, the *g.yang* support of the *sham-po* divine yak,[159] the *g.yang* support of the *zal-po*[160] divine yak, the *g.yang* support of the black divine yak, and the *g.yang* support of the blue divine yak are decorated with silk cloth *lhab ma lhub*.[161] They have tiger and leopard [skin] decorations *khral ma khrol*.[162] They have withers decorated with vermilion[163] and *rnga-ma*.[164] The tops of their heads are decorated

[155] See Part Three, section ix, p. 342 (fn. 503). Part Five, section vi, p. 451 (fn. 100).

[156] This word must be etymologically related to the term for a goat who has had a kid, *'tsher-mo*. See Part Five, section vi, p. 449 (fn. 96). In some dialects of sTod, the word for goat is *tshed-tshed* or *tshed-de*. See Ra-lha tshed-mo, Part Three, section ix, p. 00.

[157] *Ma'u* specially denotes a female sheep with a lamb.

[158] *rMa gnyan spom ra'i g.yang len rten 'dzugs* (New Collection of Bon *bka' brten*, vol. 87, nos. 967–998). No author or finder is mentioned.

[159] Designates a kind of fine yak, with a very long belly fringe.

[160] A large yak with a long belly fringe and a black and white marbled color.

[161] *Lhab ma lhub* conveys that the cloth is fluttering in the wind.

[162] *Khral ma khrol* depicts that the skins are hanging off the yaks.

[163] In the custom prevailing in Upper Tibet, livestock are decorated with *btsag* (red ochre), which is found in many locales.

[164] Tassels made from the dyed hair of a yak tail.

with swastikas of butter. They have auspicious *phye-mar*[165] put on their heads. We offer *phye-mar* to the *g.yang-lha*. Today, for you *g.yang-lha*, we raise the support of this handsome divine yak. You let this be our *g.yang* support. Do not remove the stake of our *g.yang*.[166] Preserve without decrease our *phywa* and *g.yang*.

(ii) *Kyai*! We erect the *g.yang* support for you. The *g.yang* support of the white divine female yak, the *g.yang* support of the *sham-mo* divine female yak, the *g.yang* support of the *zal-mo* divine female yak, and the *g.yang* support of the blue divine female yak are decorated with silk cloth *lhab ma lhub*. They have tiger and leopard [skin] decorations *khral ma khrol*. They have red and blue *mon-cog*[167] *pu ru ru*.[168] They have white sacks of *g.yang*[169] suspended from their necks. Refrain.[170]

(iii) *Kyai*! We erect the *g.yang* support for you. The divine sheep with the light gray face and dark markings around the eyes, the handsome red-faced divine sheep, the divine sheep with the blue face and dark markings around the eyes, and the divine sheep with the white face and iron [blue] horns have their ears decorated with jewels and different-colored cloth. Their withers are decorated with tiger and leopard [skins], and colored wool. Refrain.[171]

(iv) *Kyai*! We erect the *g.yang* support for you. The bright light-orange divine horse, the red divine horse, the gray divine horse with a black mane, the *rkyang-bu*[172] roan divine horse, and the divine horse with a white face and white markings near the ears are decorated with silk cloth *lhab ma lhub*. They have golden bridles and turquoise halters *si li li*.[173] They have horsewhips and silk saddle straps *prings se pring*.[174] They have the sound of the *me-long* and conch *lhangs se lhang*.[175] They

[165] Parched barley grain and butter preparation.
[166] That is to say, 'keep the *g.yang* stable'.
[167] Probably a kind of mast with many cloths and pompoms placed on the top of the head of the yaks.
[168] *Pu ru ru* replicates a swirling action.
[169] *g.Yang-khug dkar-po*. These must contain blessed substances and precious materials, corresponding with the less portable *g.yang-sgam* (chest of good fortune).
[170] This begins with, "They have foreheads decorated with swastikas of butter" and ends with the line, "Preserve without decrease our *phywa* and *g.yang*." The only variation from para i is that *lha 'bri* (divine female yak) is substituted for *lha-g.yag* (divine male yak).
[171] Same refrain but with the substitution of *lha-lug* (divine sheep).
[172] Refers to color and markings of the *rkyang* (onager), usually a lustrous variegated reddish color.
[173] *Si li li* depicts a tintinnabulous sound.
[174] *Prings se pring* conveys a sharp movement like the plucking of a bowstring.
[175] *Lhangs se lhang* depicts the way in which sound is carried over long distances.

have tiger pelts and colored cloths *wangs se wang*.[176] They have cowry shells that appear laughing *khra la la*.[177] Refrain.[178]

(v) *Kyai*! We erect the *g.yang* support for you. On a cane [shaft] with nine joints is put a spear point of conch. It is decorated with ornaments of five different-colored cloths. It has white ensigns *spungs se spung*.[179] Today for Pom-ra and his retinue we erect for the support, this ornamented very sharp spear. *Kye*! We erect the *g.yang* support for you. A hard[180] bamboo [shaft] with nine joints decorated with the feathers of the brave king of the birds (lammergeier). It has white cloths and *me-long lhabs se lhab*. It has jeweled ornaments *khra la la*. Today, for Pom-ra and his retinue, we erect for the support, this arrow with cloths and *me-long*.

Transliteration of the rMa gnyan pom ra'i g.yang len rten 'dzugs *text*

(i—nos. 978, ln. 5 to 980, ln. 1) kyai khyod la g.yang rten 'dzug pa ni / lha g.yag dkar po'i g.yang rten dang / lha g.yag sham po'i g.yang rten dang / lha g.yag zal po'i g.yang rten dang / lha g.yag rog po'i g.yang rten dang / lha g.yag sngon po'i g.yang rten rnams / dar zab rgyan gyi lhab ma lhub / stag gzig rgyan gyi khral ma khrol / sog steng mtshal dang rnga ma'i (= mas) brgyan / Refrain * /

* Refrain (appended to end of paras i and ii with gender adjustment and to para iii and iv with species adjustment): dpral bar mar gyi g.yung drung brgyan / spyi bor bkra shis phye mar blug / phye mar g.yang lha rnams la mchod / de ring lha g.yag bzhin bzang 'di / g.yang lha khyed la rten du 'dzug / khyed kyi 'di la g.yang rten mdzod / g.yang gi rten phur ma phud cig / phya (= phywa) g.yang ma nyams skyobs par mdzod /

(ii—nos. 981, ln. 2 to 982, ln. 2) kyai khyed la g.yang rten 'dzug pa ni / lha 'bri dkar mo'i g.yang rten dang / lha 'bri bshams (= sham) mo'i g.yang rten dang / lha 'bri zal mo'i g.yang rten dang / lha 'bri sngon mo'i g.yang rten rnams / dar zab rgyan gyi lhab ma lhub / stag gzig rgyan gyi khra (= khral) ma khrol / mon cog sngon dmar pu ru ru / g.yang khug dkar po mgul du btag / Refrain /

[176] *Wangs se wang* describes the moving whorls on the tiger's coat.
[177] *Khra la la* conveys the movement or twinkling of many colors.
[178] Same refrain but with substitution of *lha-rta* (divine horse).
[179] *sPungs se spung* portrays that there is a big batch of flags.
[180] *rGod*. This word could also denote that the bamboo is unused.

(iii—nos. 983, ln. 3 to 984, ln. 3) kyai khyed la g.yang rten 'dzug pa ni / lha lug skya rtsa bang mig dang / lha lug dmar rtsa bzhin bzang dang / lha lug sngo rtsa bang mig dang / lha lug ga pa lcags ru rnams / rna ba dar sna rin chen brgyan / sog steng stag gzig bal mtshon (= tshon) brgyan / Refrain /

(iv—nos. 985, ln. 3 to 986, ln. 5) kyai khyed la g.yang rten 'dzug pa ni / lha rta dkar po ngang yag dang / lha rta dmar po mtshal bu dang / lha rta gro bo rngog nag dang / lha rta rkyang bu mtshal dkar dang / lha rta ga pa zur mdong rnams / dar zab rgyan gyi lhab ma lhub / gser skrab (= srab) g.yu mthur si li li / sba lcags dar sgrogs prings se pring / me long dung skad lhangs se lhang / dar tshon stag ral wangs se wang / mgron bu mthong bzhed khra la la / Refrain /

(v—nos. 988 ln. 1 to 989, ln. 5) kyai khyed la g.yang rten 'dzug pa ni / sba dkar tshigs pa dgu pa la / Un chen dung gi mdung so la / dar sna lnga'i brgyan gi (= rgyan gyis) bgryan / ru mtshon dkar po dpungs se dpung (= spungs se spung) / de ring dbal mdung rgyan ldan 'di / pom ra 'khor bcas rten du 'dzugs / kye khyed la g.yang rten 'dzug pa ni / snyug rgod tshigs pa dgu pa la / bya rgyal rgod kyi sgro'i (= sgro yis) brgyan / dar dkar me long lhabs se lhab / rin chen rgyan cha khra la la / de ring mda' dar me long 'di / pom ra 'khor bcas rten du 'dzugs (= 'dzug) /

The Bon ritual text *Mu ye pra phud phya'i* (= *phywa'i*) *mthur thug* records the origin myth for the zoomorphic *rten* (support) of the *phywa* and *g.yang*. This rare work relates how the son of 'O-de gung-rgyal and Phywa-lcam lo-ma, Phwa/Lha-sras sgam-po, managed to capture an island dwelling magical conch deer with crystal horns to serve as the *rten* for humans and their ancestral deities. By obtaining the deer as the foundation for the *phywa* and *g.yang*, humans and deities were able to extricate themselves from misfortune and attain all types of boons. In the text the deer *rten* is described by the adjective *g.yung-drung* (swastika), indicating its stable and enduring nature. In addition to providing a mythical precedent for the *g.yang* animals of the indigenous tradition, the dialogue between the magical deer and Phywa/Lha-sras sgam-po takes on the tone of a religious teaching. The theme of this parable is that only by fully realizing qualities such as charity, magnanimity and affection is one truly able to serve

their own needs and those of others. The active regard for others embodied in this morality closely corresponds with the Mahayana ideal of altruism (*bodhicitta*), however; the physical setting and protagonists in the account belong to native Tibetan tradition. As the tale is set in the early period, it is worth raising the question of whether the pre-Buddhist religions of Tibet and the Mahayana Buddhism of India had a code of ethics with certain philosophical dimensions in common.

Texts such as *Mu ye pra phud phywa'i mthur thug* share the lyricism of archaic Tibetan literature, and indeed the *g.yang 'gugs* ritual is attested in the Tun-huang manuscripts (Karmay and Nagano: viii, xi).[181] The text begins with prostrations to the various deities of the *g.yang* and instructions for making the ritual *gtor-ma* known as *'brang-rgyas*.[182] This is followed by the *cho-rabs* (attestation of ritual origins) of the *g.yang* deer, which is written in smaller print than the main body of the ritual. This narrative is skillfully rendered in verse with seven syllables in each line. As in other Bon etiologic myths, the ultimate cosmogonic principle is the void in which a light appears (para i). From this light all the animate and inanimate features of the universe come into being. Along with the four elements of wind, fire, water, and earth, mountains and lakes are recorded as a primary engendering factor of existence, reflecting the importance of this geographic dyad in the cosmogonies of the oral tradition. According to the text, in the beginning of existence, humans appeared in conjunction with their deities, underlining the way in which these two entities share the same ontological and genetic basis in indigenous Tibetan tradition.

[181] In an Indian Office Tun-huang manuscript published by Thomas practitioners known as *lha-bon*, *g.yang-bon* and *phya-bon* perform *sku-bla* (protective rites) and *g.yang du blang* (raising up the good fortune capability) rites (Stein 2003: 596, 597).

[182] The beginning of the text reads: "We prostrate to the four: *phywa*, *gnyan*, *g.yang gsas*, and *mu-ye pra-phud*; the five types of great *gsas*, the five *lha* brothers, and all the *lha-mo* of the *g.yang*. Firstly, the *'brang-rgyas* of the *phywa* has a round base and square superstructure. On the square [superstructure] make two *mkhar-thabs* (castle-like structures) surmounted by flaming jewels. Around the *mkhar-thabs* below [make] four squares in the four directions. The top is decorated by a blazing jeweled sun and moon." (*Mu ye pra phud g.yang gsas phywa gnyan bzhi / gsas chen rigs lnga nor lha mched lnga dang / g.yang gi lha mo rnams la phyag 'tshal lo / dang po phywa'i 'brang rgyas ni / rtsa ba zlum po gru bzhi'i khar / gru bzhi mkhar thabs nyis thog steng du rin chen 'bar ba bya / mkhar thabs 'og ma gru bzhi bzhis skor* (= *bskor*) */ rtse la nyi zla rin chen 'bar bas mtshon*).

Addressing the convocation of *phywa* gods, the progenitor of the universe Srid-pa sangs-po clearly spells out the liabilities of not having a foundation for the *phywa* (para ii), spurring the *phywa* gods to act (para iii). The god Phywa/Lha-sras sgam-po volunteers to bring back the *phywa* support and seeks the help of the great goddess gNam-phyi gung-rgyal, who directs him to an island located on the north side of the world mountain Ri-rab lhun-po (para iii). This island and lake are the residence and soul repositories of the magic stag Crystal Horned Conch Deer. The abode of this deer of the *phywa* and *g.yang* illustrates the sacred geomantic qualities of islands in Tibetan geographic conceptions. Imbued with a secret or innermost aspect and occupying the most exclusive of locations, the geographic source of the *phywa* and *g.yang* recalls the string of early *gsas-mkhar/gsas-khang* (temples) located on the islands of Upper Tibetan lakes (Bellezza 2001: 23–25).

In the dialogue that follows between Phywa/Lha-gsas sgam-po and Crystal-Horned Conch Deer we learn that the various deities of good fortune actually reside on the deer (para vi), a belief still held by the *'brog-pa* regarding choice livestock. The text also makes reference to the *bdud kyi chu-bzhi* (the four rivers of the *bdud*) (para vi), which may have some correspondence with the Chu-bo bzhi, the four great rivers of western Tibet.[183] It is only after much disputation that Crystal Horned Conch Deer is enticed to return to the land of the *phywa* gods (paras v–x). Phywa/Lha-sras sgam-po promises the stag that he will be given excellent food and drink, decorated with vermilion and indigo, and ornamented with cloths, gold and turquoise (para xi), providing the mythic criteria for the custom of *g.yang* animals still prevalent today. The *cho-rabs* states that the stag was treated as promised including being kept in a special corral (para xii). This may suggest that deer were once domesticated in Tibet.[184] The narrative concludes by affirming that the deer was instrumental in the establishment of the *phywa* and *g.yang* of the ancestral gods (para xii):[185]

[183] See Part One, section iv, p. 48 (fn. 47).
[184] The domestic deer is alluded to in the *Old Tibetan Chronicle* (Uray 1972: 10). An ancient petroglyph of an anthropomorph riding a stag is found at Lha-klu mkhar (Suolang Wangdui 1994: 167).
[185] See Karmay and Nagano 2002, Text 2, folios 1b, ln. 1 to 9a, ln. 4. The precise meaning of *mu-ye pra-phud* in the context of the title and first verse of the text is unclear. It appears to refer to a Zhang-zhung class of *lha*, which includes figures such as Mu-thur pra-phud. *Mu-ye* probably translates as 'celestial primordial' and the Zhang-zhung word *pra-phud* is sometimes equated with *rdo-rje*.

(i) Collect the *phywa*[186] ingredients according to how they are described in the text and say: *bSwo*! In the ancient times of original existence, in the ancient primordial epoch, from vacuous emptiness appeared an omniscient light. This light increased in intensity, and from it, through the noble qualities of the mind of the wisdom god and the general merit of sentient beings, arose the animate and inanimate worlds. In the empty expanse of space arose the realms of wind, fire, water, earth, mountains, lakes, the four worlds,[187] and the eight minor worlds. They exist as the substances of the five elements. Thereafter sentient beings that are the contents[188] came into being. The Lha-gar-rten gsum,[189] these three; the *humans smra* and *gshen*),[190] these three; the *dmu, bdud* and *btsan*, these three; the *'dre, srin* and *byur*,[191] these three; [all] came into being. [All] that there is and is not in existence cannot be delineated. Existence came through the Srid; appointing [the objects and activities of the universe] came through the sKos.[192]

(ii) In the time of [early] existence, in the country of Phywa-yul snang-ldan (Brightness Phywa Land), in a beautiful jeweled castle, the king of the *phywa* of primordial existence gathered the *phywa* gods of existence. Then the great *phywa* Yab-lha bdal-drug[193] [said], "Please tell us Srid-pa sangs-po, the *phywa* does not have a foundation, how significant is this defect?" Thus he asked this much. Srid-pa sangs-po replied, "All the *phywa* gods of existence listen to me. Yab-lha bdal-drug of existence is the father of the three Srid, sKos and Phywa. The father god of existence does not have a *phywa* foundation because the wicked sorcery of the evil *'dre* threw the five *lha* of existence into the sky, and they occupied [the place] abandoned by the *lha*. So both their brightness and magnificent appearance have deteriorated. Humans without *phywa* have many diseases, and disease and accidents beset

[186] There is some orthographic confusion in the text regarding the words *phya* (prognosis) and *phywa* (basis of good fortune, type of deity and proto-lineage). I have corrected the former to the latter in the translation and transliteration of the text.
[187] *Gling-bzhi*. See Part Four, section iii, p. 396 (fn. 181). Part Three, p. 219 (fn. 42).
[188] *bCud*. This refers to the 'contents' or beings of the physical world/universe.
[189] For a description of this large group of deities see Part Three, section ix, pp. 328, 329 (fn. 462).
[190] For reference to the *smra* and *gshen*, primordial anthropomorphic figures, see Part Four, section iii, p. 396 (fns. 183, 184).
[191] Often conceived of as an evil spirit implicated in accidents.
[192] The sKos and Srid are the names of divinities. See Part Four, section iii, p. 396 (fn. 180).
[193] For a description of this important cosmogonic deity see Part Four, section iii, pp. 397–400 (fns. 193, 197).

livestock without *g.yang*. Without its essence food is very much weakened. These are the defects of not having a *phywa* foundation. We will seek a support for the *g.yang* gods." He said, "Who can search for a *phywa* foundation?"

(iii) The father was 'O-de gung-rgyal. The mother was Phywa-lcam lo-ma. Their son was Lha-sras sgam-po (Fully Accomplished Lha Son). Fully Accomplished Lha Son said, "I will go to search for a *phywa* foundation." The holy man of the illuminated mind rode on the thoroughbred of high intellect. He held the lasso of method in his hand. He tied the sword, the weapon of knowledge. He went to the top of Ri-rab lhun-po, inside the castle of *sum-cu rtsa-gsum* (thirty-three realms of the deities) and came before gNam-phyi gung-rgyal and asked, "The Bon-po god of existence is without the swastika *phywa* foundation. Goddess of existence please counsel me." Thus he asked this much. gNam-phyi gung-rgyal said, "On the north side of Ri-rab, in the middle of an upwelling turquoise lake, there is a four-sided swastika island. On top of the swastika island the father is gNam-sha ru-ring (Sky Deer Long Horns) and the mother is dMu-sha yu-mo (dMu Hind). The son of the union of these two is Dung-sha shel-ru can (Crystal Horned Conch Deer). You make him the foundation of the swastika *phywa*." She thus diligently instructed.

(iv) Then the swastika Phywa-sras sgam-po (Fully Accomplished Phywa Son) rode on the thoroughbred of high intellect and landed upon the swastika island. He met Conch Deer with Crystal Horns. Fully Accomplished Lha Son asked in this way, "Conch deer with the horns of crystal how do you like this lake and island of the deer? Who is your father and who is your mother? You clever deer what is your lineage? Please explain to me deer." Thus this much he asked. The deer spoke fluently in the language of humans, "My father is the sky deer with long horns, the one called Sky Deer Long Horns, the manifestation of the white sky *lha*. My mother is the hind of the *dmu*, the one called dMu Hind, the manifestation of dMu-btsun rgyal-mo. I am Crystal Horned Conch Deer. This divine lake is my soul lake and this *dmu* island is my soul mountain. You are the holy man with the illuminated mind. You ride the thoroughbred of high intellect. Where are you going? Where are you living? For what have you come?" Thus asked the deer.

(v) Phywa-sras sgam-po replied, "Listen to me Crystal Horned Conch Deer. My country is Phywa-yul steng 'brang. My father, the lord of the *phywa*, Yab-lha bdal-drug does not have the foundation of the *phywa* and *g.yang*. gNam-phyi gung-rgyal provided me with instructions. She sent me [here] to search for the foundation of the *phywa*. You are the deer of marvelous manifestation. Now please come for the *phywa* and *g.yang*." Thus this much he asked. The deer rejoined, "Listen to me

Fully Accomplished Phywa Son. The sun and moon reside in the middle of the sky. If you separate the sky from the sun and moon residing in the middle of the sky surely sentient beings would be covered by darkness. If you separate the lake from the fish and otters residing in the lake they would die. If you separate the island from the deer residing on the island it would die. You are the holy man of knowledge. Do not say that to me." Thus entreated the deer.

(vi) Again Fully Accomplished Son of the Phywa spoke, "Listen to me conch white deer. You are the deer with all the perfected qualities. The crystal horns divided into five branches on your head are a sign of the residing five *gsas* lords. The circular jewel on top of your head is a sign of the residing *mu-ye pra-phud*. The long hair on your back, the divine abode, is a sign of the residing five *lha* brothers of wealth. The deer speaking the language of humans is a sign of it serving as a messenger between the *lha* and humans. The brighter than white color of your body is a sign of the purification of sins and defilements. Your four hoofs formed from black iron are a sign of the drying of the four rivers of the *bdud* [demons]. The medicinal foliage you eat as your food is a sign of the liberation from disease. Like that you possess in full all good qualities. Please let us go now for the *phywa* of the people." Thus he said this much speech.

(vii) Again the deer replied, "Listen to me Fully Accomplished Son of the Lha. I myself am the conch white deer. I have not severed from the root the five poisons[194] therefore on my head I have branching crystal horns. I cannot [fully] comprehend speech and thought; this deer speaks broken human language. I have not purified the defilements of my body therefore the body of this deer by the effect of defilement is illusory. I am not liberated from disease therefore I am eating the foliage of medicinal plants as my food. As such, I am the deer apparition. Do not lead me to the country of humans." Upon saying this he was ready to flee. By his miraculous power Fully Accomplished Son of the Lha threw the lasso of method and caught the deer by the neck.

(viii) Fully Accomplished Son of the Lha said these words, "You are the deer possessing in full all good qualities. Do not be angry let your affection grow. If you turn anger into affection it will purge the anger of others. Be wise do not be ignorant. If you turn your ignorance into wisdom it will purify the ignorance of others. Do not be arrogant be peaceful. If you turn your pride into peace it will purify the pride of

[194] *Dug-lnga*. These are the root causes of human suffering. As they grievously harm sentient beings they are called 'poisons'. They include: *zhe-sdang* (anger), *gti-mug* (ignorance), *'dod-chags* (lust), *'phrag-dog* (envy/jealosy), and *nga-rgyal* (pride/arrogance).

others. Do not be envious be magnanimous. If you turn your envy into magnanimity it will purify the envy of others. Do not be selfish do for others. If you completely serve others [whatever you need] for yourself will come naturally."

(ix) Then the deer entreated again, "Without having affection for oneself how can one purify the anger of others? If we completely realize our own nature it will purify the ignorance of others. Without a peaceful mind in oneself how can we purify the pride of others? If our mind is peaceful it will purify the pride of others. Without magnanimity in oneself how can we purify the envy of others? If oneself is completely magnanimous it will purify the envy of others. Without a charitable inclination how can we purify the lust of others? If oneself is completely charitable in inclination it will purify the lust of others. Without the fruition [of practice] for living beings, is it not that I am included in cyclical existence?"

(x) Fully Accomplished Son of the Lha again spoke, "You are the deer of the body with knowledge. You are the son of sentient beings with the great powerful mind. The words you spoke possess much meaning. Show compassion for sentient beings that are troubled by disease, famine and weapons. Swastika deer let us go quickly." The deer then replied, "My mind is based on the four elements. The body of the four elements [can feel] great heat and cold. Please search for a place without heat or cold. The mind is based on the four elements. The body of the four elements [can feel] great thirst and hunger. Please search for food so that I am not thirsty or hungry. The mind is based on the four elements. The body of the four elements [is prone to] great fear. Please search for a country without fear." Thus requested the deer.

(xi) Fully Accomplished Son of the Phywa spoke again, "When you come to the country of the Phywa you will eat the grain crop as your food. You will drink the extract of jaggery for your thirst. You do not need to worry about thirst and hunger. You will stay in the middle of the corral of power. You do not need to worry about heat and cold. Your neck will be ornamented with gold and turquoise. Your head will be ornamented with silk cloths. Vermilion and indigo will decorate your body. We will install you as the support of the *lha* and *gsas*. We will lay you as the foundation of the *phywa* and *g.yang*. You do not need to worry about fear and anxiety." Thus this much speech he said. Both Fully Accomplished Son of the Lha and the deer went to the *phywa* country of sNang-ldan g.yu-rtse (Brightness Turquoise Peak), at the secret *phywa* castle of nine peaks. Fully Accomplished Son of the Phywa said to Yab-lha bdal-drug, "I offer to you for the foundation of the swastika *phywa* the son of both the sky deer and *dmu* deer, Crystal Horned Conch White Deer. Take the *g.yang* and human

phywa riches. May the dazzling and brilliant personal appearances be obtained." Thus he said this much.

(xii) The father *lha* of existence became happy. The head of the swastika conch white deer was ornamented by silk cloths. Gold and turquoise ornamented his neck. His body was decorated with vermilion and indigo. He was given the grain crop as his food. He was given the jaggery extract for his thirst. He was kept in the middle of the corral of power. They prayed for three days and for three days they summoned the *g.yang* and human *phywa* of riches. For three days they collected the dazzling and magnificent personal appearances. After nine days had passed, through the miraculous Yab-lha bdal-drug and the magical swastika deer, there came to be the four castles of the swastika *phywa* and the various constituents of the *phywa* and *g.yang*.

Transliteration of the Mu ye pra phud phywa'i mthur thug *excerpt*

i) phywa'i rdzas rnams gzhung las 'byung ba bzhin du sog la 'di skad do / bswo / gna' snga srid pa'i dang po la / zhe snga bskal pa'i thog ma la / ci yang med pa'i stong pa las / ci yang mkhyen pa'i 'od cig byung / 'od de rab tu rgyas pa las / ye shes lha yi thugs rje dang / spyi mthun sems can bsod nams las / phyi nang snod bcud 'jig rten chags / nam mkha' stong pa'i dbyings nyid la / rlung me chu sa ri mtsho gling / gling bzhi gling phran brgyad du chags / 'byung ba lnga'i rgyu las srid / de las bcud kyi sems can srid / lha gar rten gsum dang / mi smra gshen dang gsum / dmu bdud btsan dang gsum / 'dre srin byur dang gsum du srid / ma srid dgu srid na / srid pas srid la skos pas bskos /

ii) dus dang srid pa de tsam na / yul ni phywa yul snang ldan na / mkhar ni rin chen mdzes pa na / ye srid phywa yi rgyal po yis / srid pa'i phywa gsas kun bsdus nas / phywa che yab lha bdal drug la / g.yung drung phywa'i gzhi med nas / 'di la nyes skyon ci ltar mchis / srid pa sangs pos lung stsol cig / de skad tsam zhig zhus pa dang / srid pa sangs pos bka' stsal (= bstsal) ba / srid pa'i phywa gsas kun gson dang / srid pa yab lha bdal drug ni / srid skos phywa dang gsum gyi yab / srid pa yab lha de lags na / de la phywa gzhi med pa de / ngam 'dre nag po'i cho 'phrul gyis / srid pa'i lha lnga gnam du 'phangs / lha 'phangs shul du bdud zhugs pas / bkrag dang gzi mdangs gnyis su nyams / mi la phywa med na tsha mang / nor la g.yang med god kha sdang / zas la bcud med bud 'thor mang / de ni phywa gzhi med pa'i skyon lags

pas / dang po g.yung drung phywa la gzhi zhig 'tshal / g.yang gsas rnams la rten cig 'tshal / de la phywa gzhi tshol ba sus nus gsungs /

iii) pha de 'od de gung rgyal lags / ma ni phywa lcam lo ma'i sras / bu ni lha sras sgam po yin / lha sras sgam po'i zhal na re / phywa gzhi tshol du bdag 'gro gsungs / rig pa sems kyi mi pho des / cang shes yid kyi rta la zhon / thabs kyi zhags pa lag tu thogs / shes rab mtshon cha'i ral gri btags / ri rab lhun po'i rtse la byon / sum cu rtsa gsum mkhar nang du / gnam phyi gung rgyal drung du phyin / srid pa lha'i bon po la / g.yung drung phywa'i gzhi med bas (= pas) / phywa gzhi tshol du btang pa (= ba) lags / srid pa'i lha mos lung stsol zhig / de skad tsam zhig zhus pa dang / gnam phyi gung rgyal zhal na re / ri rab 'di'i byang phyogs na / g.yu mtsho mer ba'i dkyil shed na / g.yung drung brag gu zur bzhi yod / g.yung drung brag gu'i steng shed na / pha ni gnam sha ru ring yin / ma ni dmu sha yu mo yin / yab yum de gnyis sprul pa'i sras / dung sha shel ru can cig yod / g.yung drung phywa gzhi de la gyis / de skad nges pa'i lung bstan nas /

iv) g.yung drung phywa sras sgam po de / cang shes yid kyi rta la zhon / g.yung drung brag gu'i steng du phyin / dung sha shel ru cig dang mjal / lha sras sgam pos 'di skad zhus / dung sha shel gyi rwa co can / mtsho brag sha ba ci ltar dgyes / pha ni su la ma ni gang / khyed rang cang shes gang gi rigs / sha bas bdag la bshad du gsol / de skad tsam zhig zhus pa dang / sha bas mi skad lhangs kyis smras / pha ni gnam sha ru ring yin / gnam sha ru ring bya ba red / gnam lha dkar po'i sprul pa yin / ma ni dmu sha yu mo yin / dmu sha yu mo bya ba de / dmu btsan rgyal mo (= mo'i) sprul pa yin / nga rang dung sha shel ru yin / lha mtsho dmu brag bla ri bla mtsho lags / rig pa sems kyi mi pho khyed / cang shes yid kyi rta la zhon / gar 'gro gar gnas su la don / de skad sha bas zhus pa dang /

v) phywa sras sgam po'i zhal na re / dung sha shel ru tshur gson dang / yul ni phywa yul steng 'brang na / phywa rje yab lha bdal drug la / phywa dang g.yang gi gzhi med pas / gnam phyi gung rgyal lung bstan nas / bdag ni phywa gzhi tshol du btang pa (= ba) lags / ya mtshan sprul pa'i sha ba khyed / phywa dang g.yang la da gshegs 'tshal / de skad tsam zhig zhus pa dang / sha ba de yi zhal na re / phywa sras sgam po tshur gson dang / dgung la nyi zla gnas pa de / nyi zla gung la bral bas na / sems can mun pas g.yog par 'chis (= mchis) / nya sram mtsho la gnas pa de / mtsho dang bral na de yis 'chi / brag la sha ba gnas pa de / sha ba brag dang bral na 'chi / rig pa sems kyi mi pho khyed / bdag la de skad ma srung (= gsungs) zhig / de skad sha bas zhus pa dang /

vi) phywa sras sgam pos yang gsungs pa / dung sha dkar po tshur gson dang / yon tan kun 'tshogs sha ba khyed / mgo la shel gyi rwa co la / rtse mo lnga ru gyes pa ni / gsas rje rigs lnga gnas pa'i don / spyi gtsug nor bu 'khyil pa (= ba) ni / mu ye pra phud gnas pa'i don / ze sogs lha'i mdun sa la / nor lha mched lnga gnas pa'i don / sha bas mi skad smra ba ni / lha mi 'phrin pa byed pa'i don / sku mdog dkar po dung las gsal / bag chags sgrib pa byang pa'i (= ba'i) don / rmig bzhi nag po lcags la byas / bdud kyi chu bzhi skem pa'i don / zas su sman gyi lo 'dab za / 'du ba'i nad las grol bas (= ba'i) don / de ltar yon tan kun tshang pas / mi'i phywa la de (= da) gshegs 'tshal / de skad tsam zhig gsungs pa dang /

vii) sha ba de yis yang zhus pa / lha sras sgam po tshur gson dang / dung sha dkar po bdag nyid ni / dug lnga rtsad nas ma chod pas / mgo la shel gyi rwa co rgyas / smra bsam rang dbang ma thob pas / sha bas mi tshig 'khrul pa smra / lus kyi sgrib pa ma byang bas / rgyu ma smin sgrib sha ba'i lus / 'du ba'i nad las ma grol bas / zas su sman gyi lo 'dab bza' / de ltar sprul ba'i sha ba nga / mi'i yul du ma khrid cig / gsungs nas sha ba 'bros grabs byas / lha sras sgam po'i rdzu 'phrul gyis / thabs kyi zhags pa phar rgyab te (= ste) / sha ba de'i mgul nas bzung /

viii) lha sras sgam pos 'di skad gsungs / yon tan kun tshang sha ba khyed / zhe sdang ma mdzad byams pa bskyed / zhe sdang byams par klong gyur na / gzhan gyi zhe sdang 'byongs pa yin / gti mug ma mdzad ye shes mdzod / gti mug ye shes klong gyur na / gzhan gyi gti mug 'byongs pa yin / nga rgyal ma mdzad zhi ba mdzod / nga rgyal zhi ba'i klong gyur na / gzhan gyi nga rgyal 'byongs pa yin / 'phrag dog ma mdzad gzhan don mdzod / gzhan don mtha' ru phyin pa na / bdag don lhun gyis 'grub nas yong /

ix) de la sha bas yang zhus pa / rang nyid byams sems ma ldan pas / gzhan gyi zhe sdang gang gis sbyong / rang nyid byang sems

sbyong pa na / gzhan gyi zhe sdang sbyong pa yin / rang nyid ye shes ma ldan pas / gzhan gyi gti mug gang la sbyong / rang nyid ye shes mngon gyur na / gzhan gyi gti mug sbyong pa'o / rang nyid zhi sems ma ldan pas / gzhan gyi nga rgyal gang gis sbyong / rang nyid zhi sems ldan pa na / gzhan gyi nga rgyal sbyong pa yin / rang nyid yangs pa'i sems dang ma ldan pas / gzhan gyi phrag dog gang gyis sbyong / rang nyid yangs sems mthar phyin na / gzhan gyi phrag dog sbyong pa'o / rang nyid sbyin sems ma ldan pas / gzhan gyi 'dod chags gang gis sbyong / rang nyid sbyin pa mthar phyin na / gzhan gyi 'dod chags sbyong pa'o / ma smin 'gro don byed pa de / nga 'khor ba 'khyams par ma gtogs sam /

x) lha sras sgam pos yang gsungs pa / sha ba'i lus la shes rab ldan / sems can bu la sems rtsal che / gsung pa'i tshig la tshig don ldan / nad mug mtshon gyis gdung pa yi / sems can de rnams snying rje bas / g.yung drung sha ba myur du gshegs / de la sha bas yang zhus pa / bdag gi sems ni 'byung ba bzhi la rten (= brten) / 'byung bzhi phung po tsha grang che / tsha grang med pa'i gnas cig 'tshal / sems ni 'byung ba bzhi la brten / 'byung bzhi phung po skom stogs (= ltogs) che / skom stogs (= ltogs) med pa'i zas cig 'tshal / sems ni 'byung ba bzhi la rten (= brten) / 'byung bzhi phung po 'jigs skrag che / 'jigs skrag med pa'i yul cig 'tshal / de skad sha bas zhus pa dang /

xi) phywa sras sgam pos yang gsungs pa / phywa yi yul du gshegs tsam na / zas su 'bras kyi lo tog bza' / skom du bu ram nying khu 'thung / skom ltogs gnyis la smos ci dgos / dbang gi ra ba' gung du gnas / tsha grang gnyis la smos ci dgos / 'gul (= mgul) du gser dang g.yu yis brgyan / mgo la dar dang zab kyis brgyan / lus la mtshal dang ram gyis brgyan / lha dang gsas kyi rten du 'dzugs / phywa dang g.yang gi gzhi ru 'dings / 'jigs skrag gnyis la smos ci dgos / de skad tsam zhig gsungs pa dang / lha sras sgam po sha ba gnyis / phywa yul snang ldan g.yu rtser byon / phywa mkhar gsang ba rtse dgu na / srid pa yab lha bdal drug la / phywa sras sgam pos 'di skad zhus / gnam sha dmu sha gnyis kyi sras / dung sha shel gyi rwa co can / g.yung drung phywa yi gzhi ru 'bul / mi phywa phyug g.yang len par mdzod / bkrag dang gzi mdangs theb par mdzod / de skad tsam zhig zhus pa dang /

xii) srid pa'i yab lha thugs dgyes nas / g.yung drung dung sha dkar

po la / mgo la dar dang zab kyis brgyan / mgul du gser dang g.yu yis brgyan / lus la mtshal dang ram gyis brgyan / zas su 'bras kyi lo tog sbyin / skom du bu ram nying khu sbyin / dbang gi ra ba dgung du bzhag / zhag gsum phywa ru smon lam btab / zhag gsum mi phywa phyug g.yang bkug / zhag gsum bkrag dang gzi mdangs bsdus / zhag dgu lon gyi pha rol du / yab lha bdal drug rdzu 'phrul dang / g.yung drung sha bas sprul pa las / g.yung drung phywa yi mkhar bzhi dang / phywa rdzas g.yang rdzas sna tshogs srid /

CONCLUSION

As this study has demonstrated, spirit-mediumship in Upper Tibet represents a cultural phenomenon that appears to exhibit a great deal of historical continuity. The Bon textual tradition places its origin in the pre-Imperial period, and cultural historical evidence indicates that it has come down to us with many of its ancient features intact. While Bon claims for the pre-Buddhist antiquity of spirit-mediumship cannot be independently corroborated, the character of this religious tradition and its role in the region's culture have been explored in some detail. As we have seen, spirit-mediumship and the cult of territorial deities act as a kind of bridge between indigenous and Buddhist culture, a vortex where two great traditions meet and merge with one another. This syncretism is one of the distinguishing characteristics of Tibetan religious culture.

Although the indigenous aspects of spirit-mediumship are among the most notable legacies still surviving in the culture of Upper Tibet, they are but a fraction of the region's native cultural patrimony. This hoary heritage extends to botanical and celestial lore, clan lineages, hunting and pastoral practices, among many other customs and traditions. One of the most trenchant signs of the persistence of old cultural forms is found in personal ornamentation and the continued usage of *gzi* stones and *thog-lcags* as amulets, some of which are probably of pre-Imperial origin. Until quite recently, they were often assiduously handed down from one generation to the next. Another graphic sign of the survival of the native heritage in Upper Tibet is the widespread usage of timeworn personal names, such as Lha-rtse, Jo-rgod, Lha-klu, and mTsho-mo, to mention but a few. Taken as a whole, these elements reflect a cultural conservatism that is probably more pronounced than anywhere else in the Tibetan cultural world, with the notable exception of certain peripheral regions of the Tibetan plateau.

This study of spirit-mediumship in Upper Tibet is Tibetological in nature—with its reliance on Tibetan cultural materials. It has focused on the practices and traditions of the spirit-mediums, using both ethnographic and textual tools of analysis. Stress has been placed upon an exposition of the initiation of the spirit-mediums, their pan-

theon of operational deities and spiritual benefactors, their ritual instruments, and the techniques they employ in healing, exorcism and safeguarding environmental homeostasis. The extensive use of primarily Bon texts has aided in the elucidation of the profession with its diverse patterns of ritual, tradition and worship, and has served to delineate its place within the ambit of Tibetan religion.

The manifold interconnections that exist between the oral tradition of the spirit-mediums and that of Tibetan religion enshrined in literary records demonstrate how closely related these two modes of cultural transmission are. Such a relationship establishes that there is little distinction between cleric-based and folk-based non-Buddhist religious practices in Upper Tibet. As discussed in Part One, a possible explanation for this common ground may be that both the literary and oral traditions are heirs to the same wide-ranging pre-Imperial cultural legacy. This hypothetical formative prehistoric bequest appears to have been strongly colored by historical developments, especially those pertaining to the adoption and propagation of Buddhism. This study has therefore favored seeing historical processes as accounting for parallel features in the literary and non-literary components of indigenous religious culture.

The Tibetan texts selected for translation in this work reconnoiter but a small corner of the universe of tradition stemming from the Upper Tibetan environment. The focus has been on the ritual systems documented in both Bon and Buddhist works that shed light on the way in which the spirit-mediums conduct their ceremonial affairs. The texts studied illustrate how diverse Tibet's homegrown traditions are in terms of literary style, content and tone. In this survey we have perused a variety of ritual works pertaining to the history and character of the native pantheon and associated religious lore. This corpus of homespun and locally modified traditions cannot be termed secular because a sacred or deistic dimension is present in virtually all of it. Nor, strictly speaking, can this native legacy be labeled as popular or folk culture because it is part and parcel of even the most exclusive spheres of traditional Tibetan social life. Additionally, it is usually assigned an august origin in Tibetan literature. Although the modes of performance and liturgical design vary considerably, the spectrum of rituals we have examined share a common purpose in realizing immediate and tangible benefits for those who conduct and sponsor them. This emphasis on the here and now, of bringing material good to society, contrasts with the

focal point of Tibet's better known soteriological literature and its preoccupation with achieving liberation from worldly bounds.

Although this work has placed little emphasis on the social status and the community role of the spirit-mediums, it is implicit that their survival into the Communist period is mainly due to perceived benefits that have accrued to the community at large as a result of their practice. Attributing their continued existence solely to blind adherence to tradition or a superstitious bent of mind is clearly not warranted. To denigrate Tibetan indigenous religious practices as backward and dysfunctional also falls short of comprehending the prevailing realities. Such an eminently pragmatic people as the Upper Tibetans have continued to foster a therapeutic system that they see as providing them with maximum benefits. It is in such an ideational and aspirant social context that the tradition of spirit-mediumship must be understood. Living in one of the most difficult environments on earth, the Upper Tibetans have developed highly efficient survival strategies in all vital areas of life. These include:

1) A refined system of stock-rearing that accents fecundity and reduces risks that lead to catastrophic loss of livestock.
2) A material culture and diet specially adapted to extremely severe high-elevation conditions.
3) Physical activities designed to harmonize with the environment.
4) An emotional bearing and mindset that is attuned to the maximum conservation of energy.

The perception of benefits is central to why the spirit-mediums have moved with the rest of us into the 21st century. While the efficacy of the therapeutic modes utilized by the mediums is open to scientific question, their role in the health care of small isolated communities is assured by their locally registered success. Moreover, their role as health care providers is strengthened by the general lack of alternatives. The implications of this are clear: so long as modern medical treatment facilities remain rudimentary, the people of Upper Tibet will continue to seek out traditional alternatives. In the last 50 years, the practice of spirit-mediumship has met with much resistance, leading to a dramatic drop in the number of practitioners, particularly among those with the most social prestige. This has made it increasingly difficult to document the profession in its entirety and collect the data needed for the scholarly reconstruction of native religious phenomena. It may also be that the disappearance of the spirit-mediums has negatively impacted healthcare in Upper Tibet.

By authoring this survey it is my intention to draw attention to the spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet, thereby stimulating further interest in their study and documentation. There is still a tremendous amount to learn and explore. Research projects that require spending extended periods of time with the spirit-mediums would be especially useful. For example, studies to identify the physical and mental health benefits derived from their therapeutic techniques are needed. It is imperative that we learn exactly how the remedial system of the spirit-mediums functions in medical terms. Perhaps studies that focus on the epistemological and ontological aspects of deity possession might also prove useful in an attempt to understand extraordinary states of human consciousness. Other types of relevant anthropological studies worth launching in Upper Tibet include:

1) Analysis of the community roles and social status of the spirit-mediums.
2) Analysis of the relationship between the spirit-mediums and other types of religious practitioners operating in the same geographic area.
3) Comparison of traditional Tibetan medical theory and practice with the healing rites used by the spirit-mediums.
4) Study of the social effects of modernization and political upheaval on the traditions of the spirit-mediums.
5) Studies with a wider geographic purview, to include spirit-mediums from other areas of the Tibetan cultural world.
6) Cross-cultural comparative studies of Tibetan spirit-mediums and their counterparts from other regions of Eurasia.

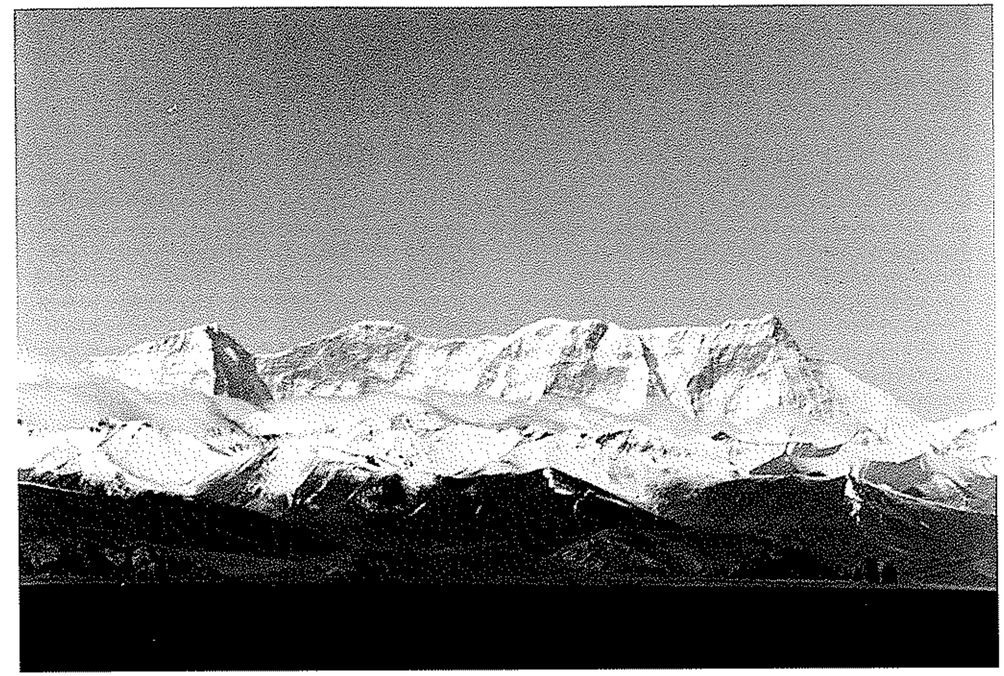
The future of the spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet is highly uncertain, as it is with analogous practitioners in many other areas of the world. The extinction of this profession in Upper Tibet—within a generation—seems a real prospect. While this may represent the inevitable march of progress, and the vindication of the materialist-rationalist approach to the understanding and ordering of the world, there are delicate human issues involved that are not so easily brushed aside by such triumphalism. These issues have to do with the high caliber of people involved in the profession and the spirit of altruism that they characteristically embody. The spirit-mediums embrace

a worldview based on active ecological and social accountability. They do not have a set fee schedule, and it is virtually unheard of for someone to be turned away for a lack of funds to pay for services. I have found that cleanliness, integrity, hospitality, and helpfulness are always the traits of the bona fide mediums of Upper Tibet. As a whole, they are a group of people who have sacrificed and toiled for the good of those around them, often with little personal gain.

In this age of catastrophic environmental destruction, perhaps even more vital to social well-being than their individual integrity, is the spirit-mediums' intricate awareness of the ecological processes that sustain us all. The spirit-mediums of Tibet uphold an etiologic view of disease that emphasizes the importance of individuals and communities continually striving for ecological integrity. Personal happiness and the general health of the community are directly related to the way in which people manage and consume natural resources. The spirit-mediums affirm that illness and misfortune are caused by negative relationships between people, the environment and the supernatural beings that reside among them and, conversely, that health and happiness are derived through positive interactions with the environment bound deities. Although parasites and unhealthy lifestyles are seen as the secondary causes of illness, the primary vectors of disease transmission are the pantheons of spirits that reside in the physical environment. These semi-divine beings have an inherently ambivalent relationship with human beings and thus can be friend or foe. By and large, these spirits—forces of the water, earth and sky—demand a pristine environment, impelling human beings to pay close attention to the way in which their activities shape and sustain the ecology.

While the spirit-mediums' understanding of personal and social health is pre-modern and not rigorously scientific (e.g. it makes little, or no account, of microscopic pathogens), it might paradoxically prove to be one of the saner approaches to the art of living. We can be assured that those in wealth-holding, decision-making positions will attempt to pronounce the fate of the spirit-mediums. And we can hope that such judgments will be made on the basis of the spirit-mediums' value to the overall salubrity of society. Nevertheless, human beings will always strive for the greatest benefits and if they feel these are to be found among those who speak for the gods, the spirit-mediums of Upper Tibet will be with us for a very long time to come.

ILLUSTRATIONS



1. The great lake gNam-mtsho and her consort gNyan-chen thang-lha.



2. The old mural of gNyan-chen thang-lha in the lCog-btsan-khang of Khang-dmar monastery, 'Dam-gzhung. The deity is holding a white banner and crystal rosary, his typical attributes in the Buddhist tradition.



3. The sacred rTa-rgo range and Dang-ra g.yu-mtsho.



4. The white mountain god rTa-rgo dge-rgan painted in the assembly hall of Se-zhig monastery, Nag-tshang. The deity wields a golden *gshang* and dagger (*phur-pa*).



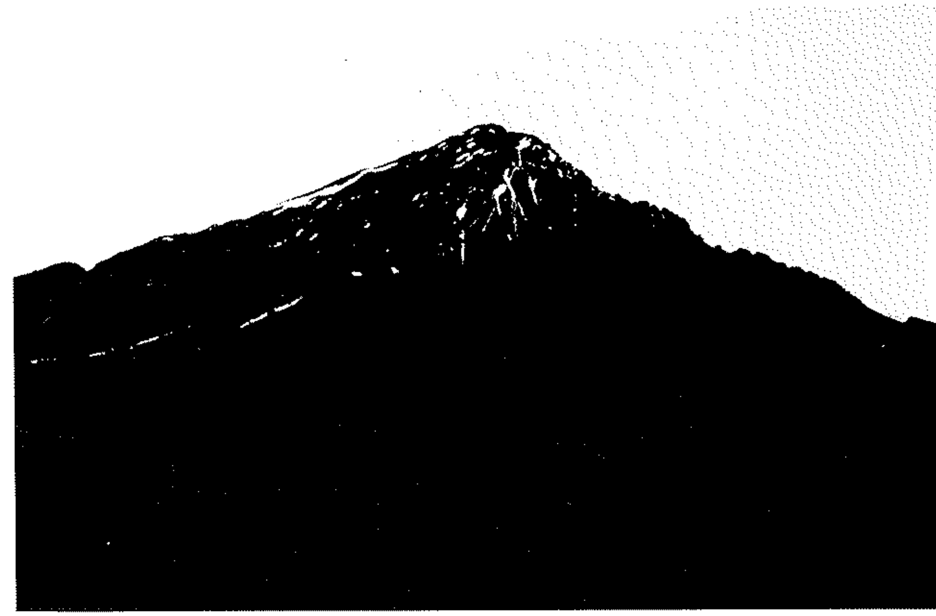
5. The red rTa-rgo lha-btsan. This mask is enshrined in the rNying-ma chapel in Nag-chu city.





6. A view of the south side of Gangs-dkar ti-se. The guardian (*gnas-bdag*) of Ti-se is Gangs-ri lha-btsan.

7. The old mask of Gangs-ri lha-btsan in the protector chapel of Chos-sku monastery, Bar-kha. This mask of Gangs-ri lha-btsan, along with one of Jag-pa me-len, managed to survive the Chinese Cultural Revolution.



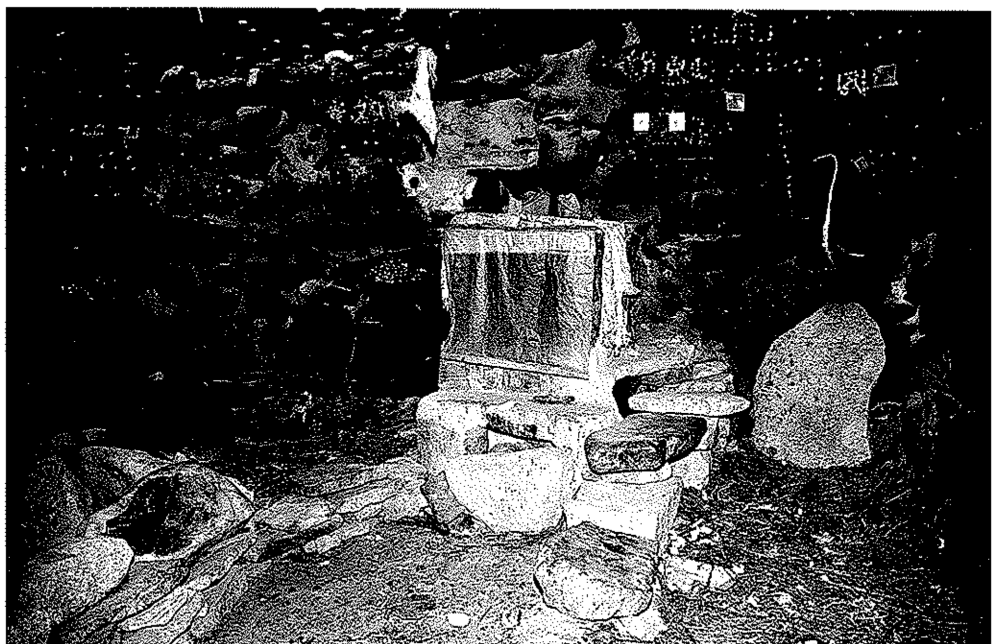
8. The black peak of Nam-ra as seen from the southeast, Bar-tha.



9. This mural of Nam-ra is found at Nam-gnyer monastery, Bar-tha.



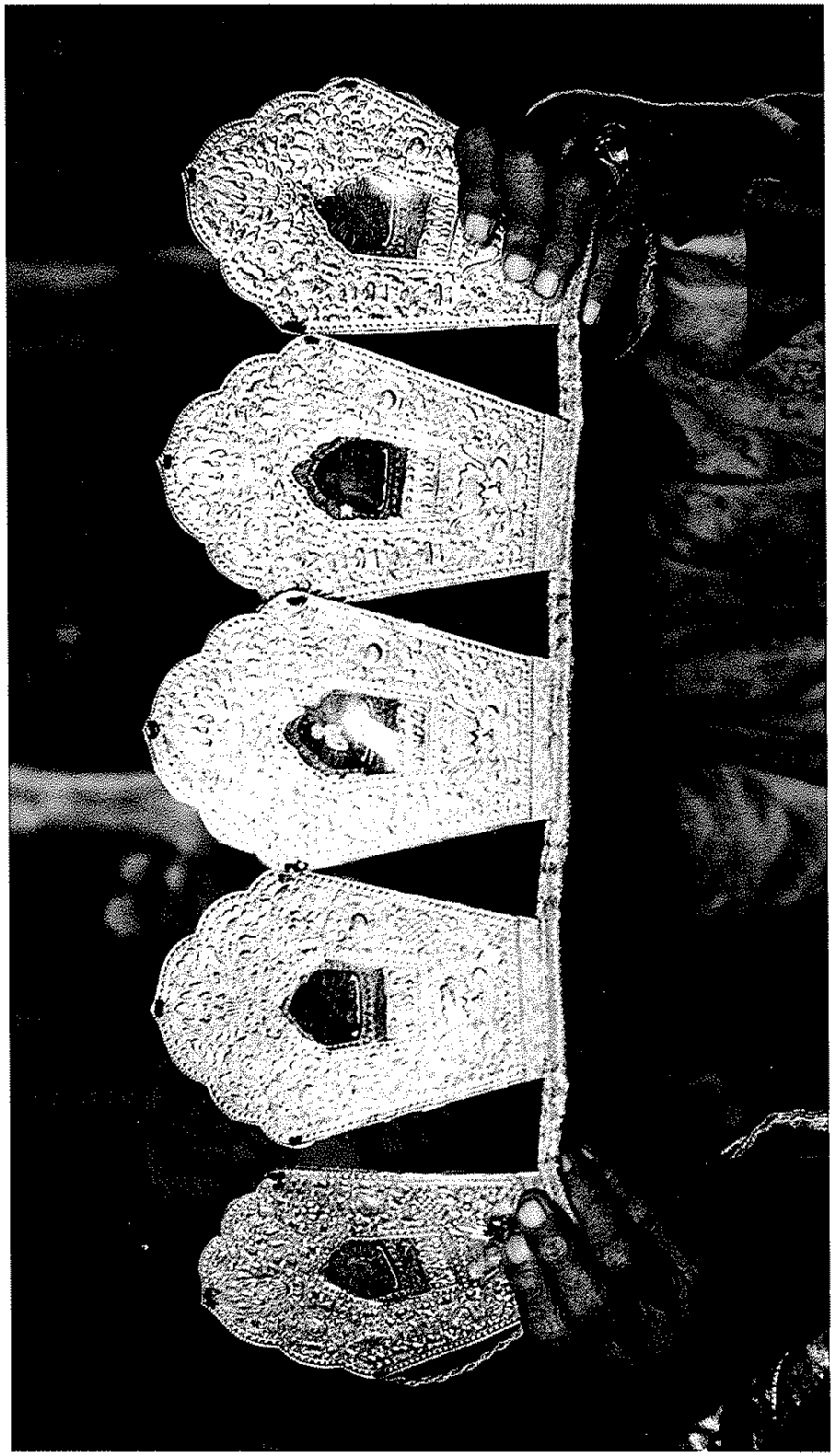
10. The interior of Shod-tram phug, the cave of initiation for the *lha-pa,* situated high on the flanks of rTa-rgo ngo-dmar lha-btsan, Nag-tshang.



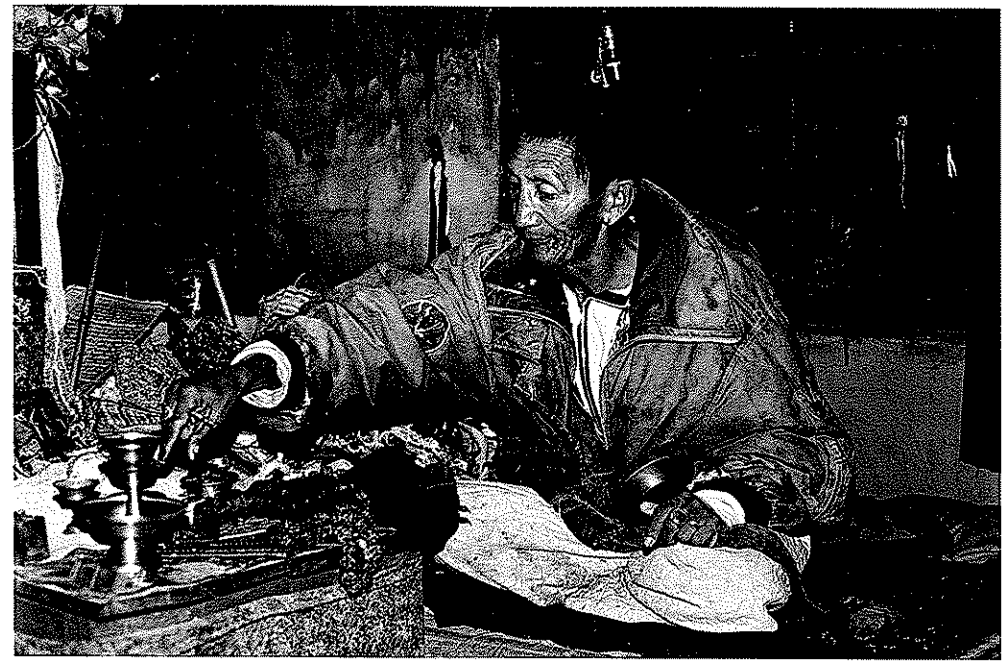
11. The interior of rDzu 'phrul phug, an ancient subterranean chapel that was used in the initiation of certain *lha-pa*, Nag-tshang.



12. bsTan-grag lha-pa in his ceremonial dress preparing to play his drum (*rnga-chen*) and *gshang*. A circular *thog-lcags* amulet can be seen suspended above the *me-long* worn on his chest.



13. The *rigs-lnga* headdress used by bsTan-grag lha-pa.



14. Pho-bo dbang-phyug preparing his altar for the trance ceremony.



15. With his *ḍa-ma-ru* and *gshang,* Pho-bo dbang-phyug begins his invocations to the gods.



16. Pho-bo dbang-phyug playing his musical instruments under possession.



17. Pho-bo dbang-phyug as the mountain god Thang-sras mchor-po.



18. The *lha-pa* dPa' dam and his neighbors near the shores of Ngang-rtse mtsho.



19. dPa' dam in full ceremonial regalia conducting the pre-trance invocations to the deities.



20. Khams-pa'i dpa' chung, the great spirit-medium of gZhung-pa ma-mtshan, playing his *da-ma-ru* and *gshang*.



21. sPu-yu, the Bon *lha-pa* of sPo-che.


22. Bu-chung, a spirit-medium from dPon-stod, in western Nag-tshang.


23. The altar of Lha-pa bstan-pa. In front of the photographs the *phyi-gling, bar-gling* and *nang-gling* mirrors are visible.


24. Lha-pa bstan-pa engaged in pre-trance invocations to the deities wearing his red turban (*thod*). Sitting beside him is the elderly neighbor who frequently translates his utterances during the séance.



25. Lha-pa bstan-pa in the trance ceremony as the powerful *btsan* Nam-ra.



26. The senior spirit-medium of Seng 'khor, Phyogs-bzhi lha-pa.



27. Lha-klu with his *ḍa-ma-ru* and *sil-snyan*. Note the 'eyes of the *khyung*' on the wings of his headdress.



28. The preserved skull of Lha-klu's giant four-horned ram, which was owned by the *btsan* deities of the trance.



29. Pho-bo lha-dbang in full ceremonial attire with his eldest son, the *lha-pa* Karma bkra-shis.



30. Pho-bo lha-dbang's altar with photographs of the deities and lamas presiding over the trance ceremony mounted on stands. The two *gling* used in the séance are visible in the center of the photograph.



31. Pho-bo lha-bang donning his *btsan-zhwa*. Note the plume of vulture feathers that Pho-bo lha-dbang brought with him from Tibet, in 1959. Near the base of the *btsan-zhwa* is a *thog-lcags* in the form of the 'triple gems' (*dkon-mchog-gsum*), on which the *rigs-lnga* headdress rests.



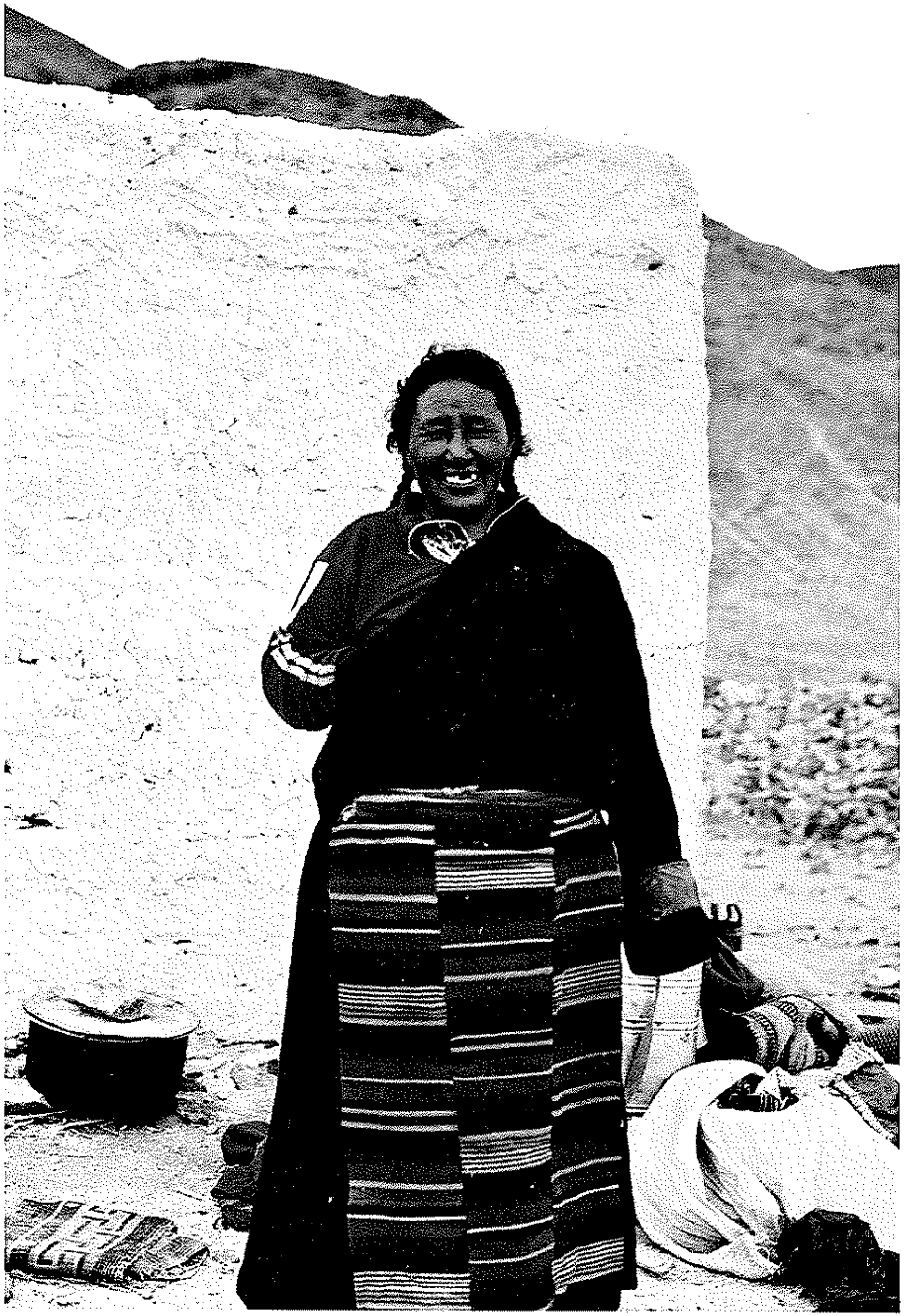
32. Pho-bo lha-dbang as the goddess A-stag klu-mo. Note the watchful 'eyes of the *bya-khyung*' bird on the wings of his headdress (*snyan-gshog*).



33. Pho-bo lha-dbang, as A-stag-klu-mo, exorcises disease-causing influences from a patient using a black cloth hanging from his ritual dagger (*phur-pa*).



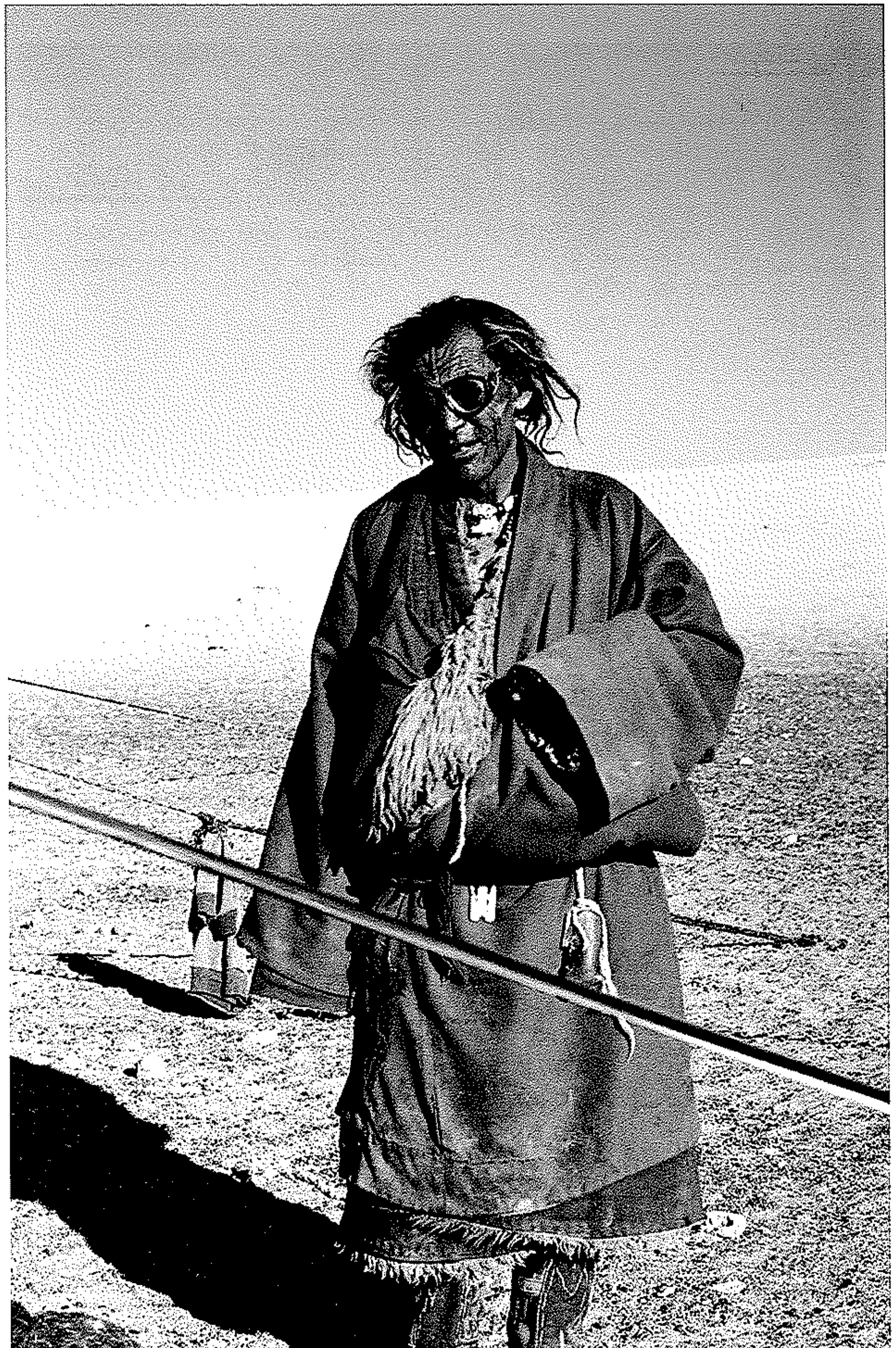
34. Embodying A-stag klu-mo, Pho-bo lha-dbang summons good fortune for all present at the trance ceremony by holding his festooned arrow (*mda' dar*) aloft.



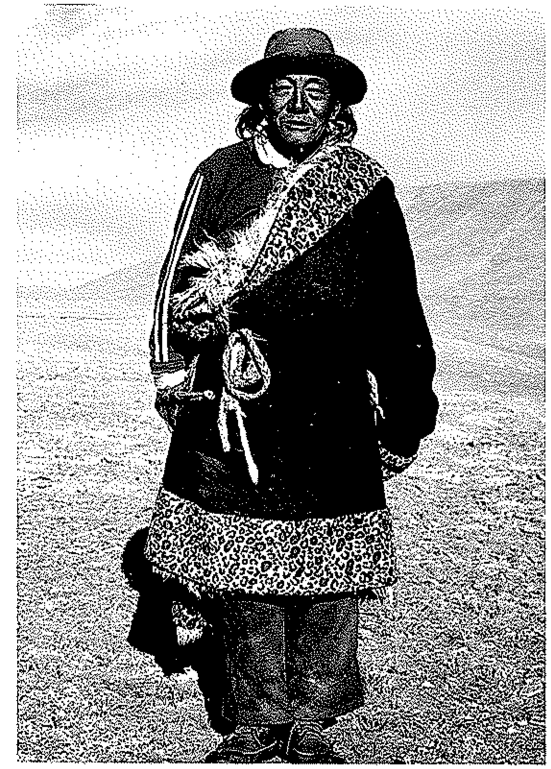
35. sGrol-dkar, the great *lha-mo* of Ru-thog.



36. sGrol-dkar possessed by Lha-mtsho mchor-mo, a form of gNam-mtsho phyug-mo.



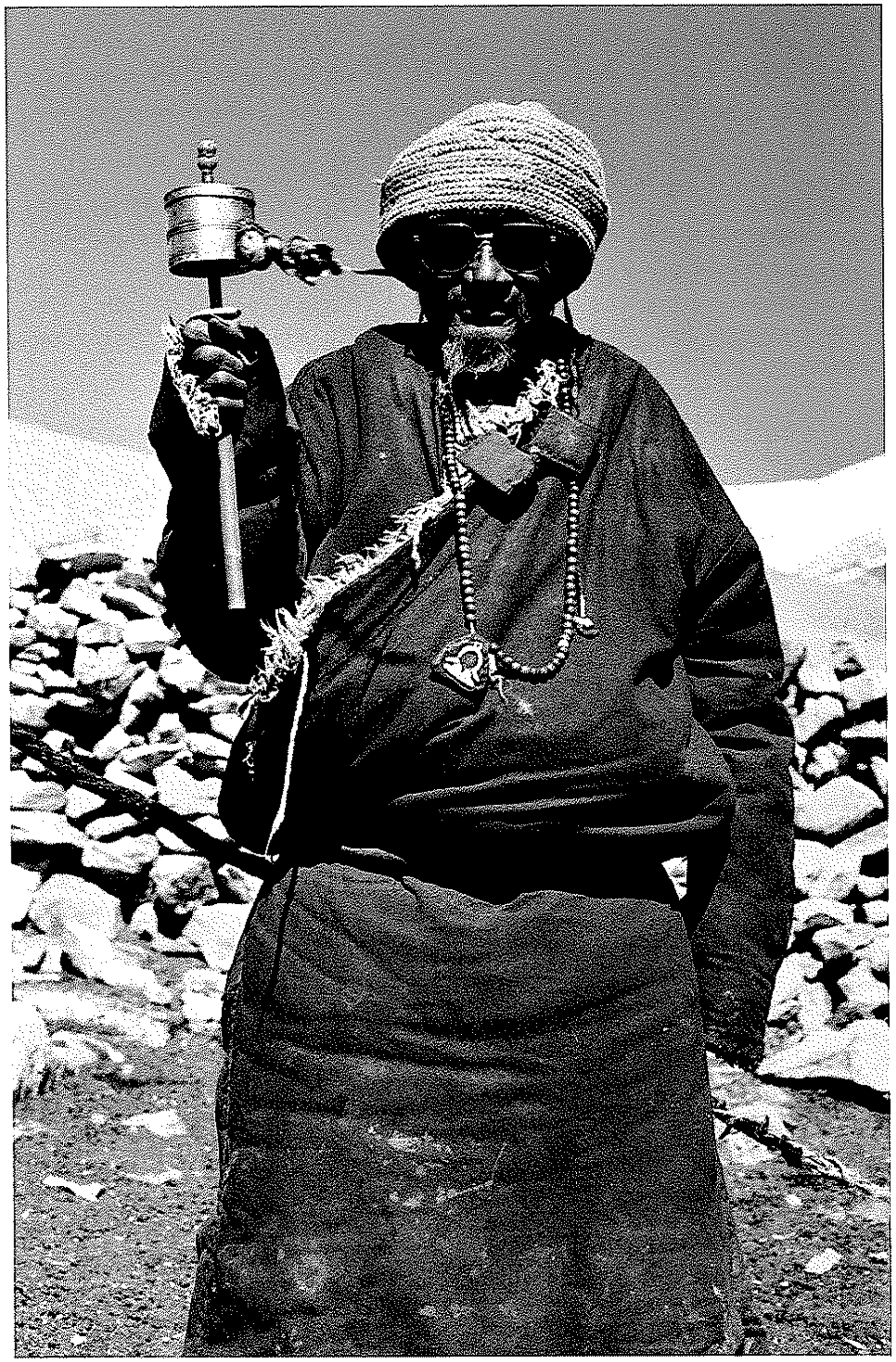
37. Pho-bo mtsho-rgyal, the senior *lha-pa* of Ru 'thor.



38. Karma rig 'dzin, the highly regarded *lha-pa* of sMad-pa.



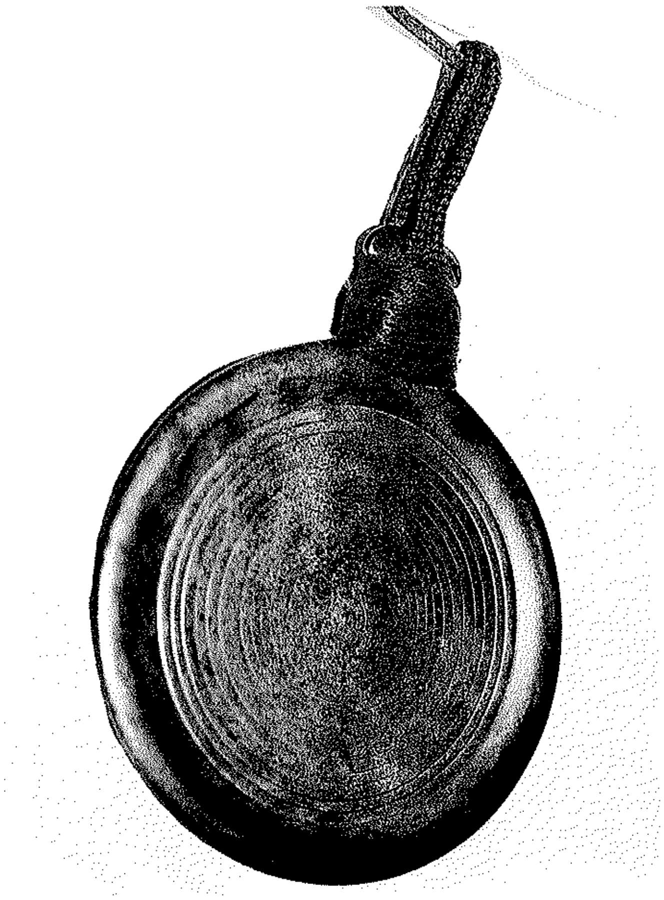
39. Karma rig 'dzin possessed by the sTag-lung protector bDud-btsan dmar-po.



40. Pho-bo chu-bzang, the elder *lha-pa* of northern sGer-rtse.



41. The late Bon-po *lha-mo* Sri-thar sgrol-ma (center) photographed in 1995. She was a spirit-medium for rTa-rgo and belonged to one of the thirteen Bon lineages of *dpa' bo* (*lha-rgyud bcu-gsum*).



42. A fine early *thog-lcags* mirror (*me-long*) with tang.



43. An ancient Tibetan *me-long* recently discovered in a sacred rock formation of A-zur, La-stod byang-ma.

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dPal chen drag po rngam pa'i thugs rgyud las / dung rab (= rabs) sgra rgyal 'brug dbyangs, attributed to Slob-dpon Padma (Gu-ru rin-po-che), in *Mi shig gu drug*, vol. 62, nos. 75–87.

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JOHN VINCENT BELLEZZA, Visiting Scholar, University of Virginia, has spent over two decades researching the cultural history of the Great Western Himalaya and Upper Tibet. He is the author of several books and numerous articles on indigenous aspects of Tibetan culture, including *Divine Dyads: Ancient Civilization in Tibet* (LTWA, 1997).

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